THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

TAYLOR SWIFT

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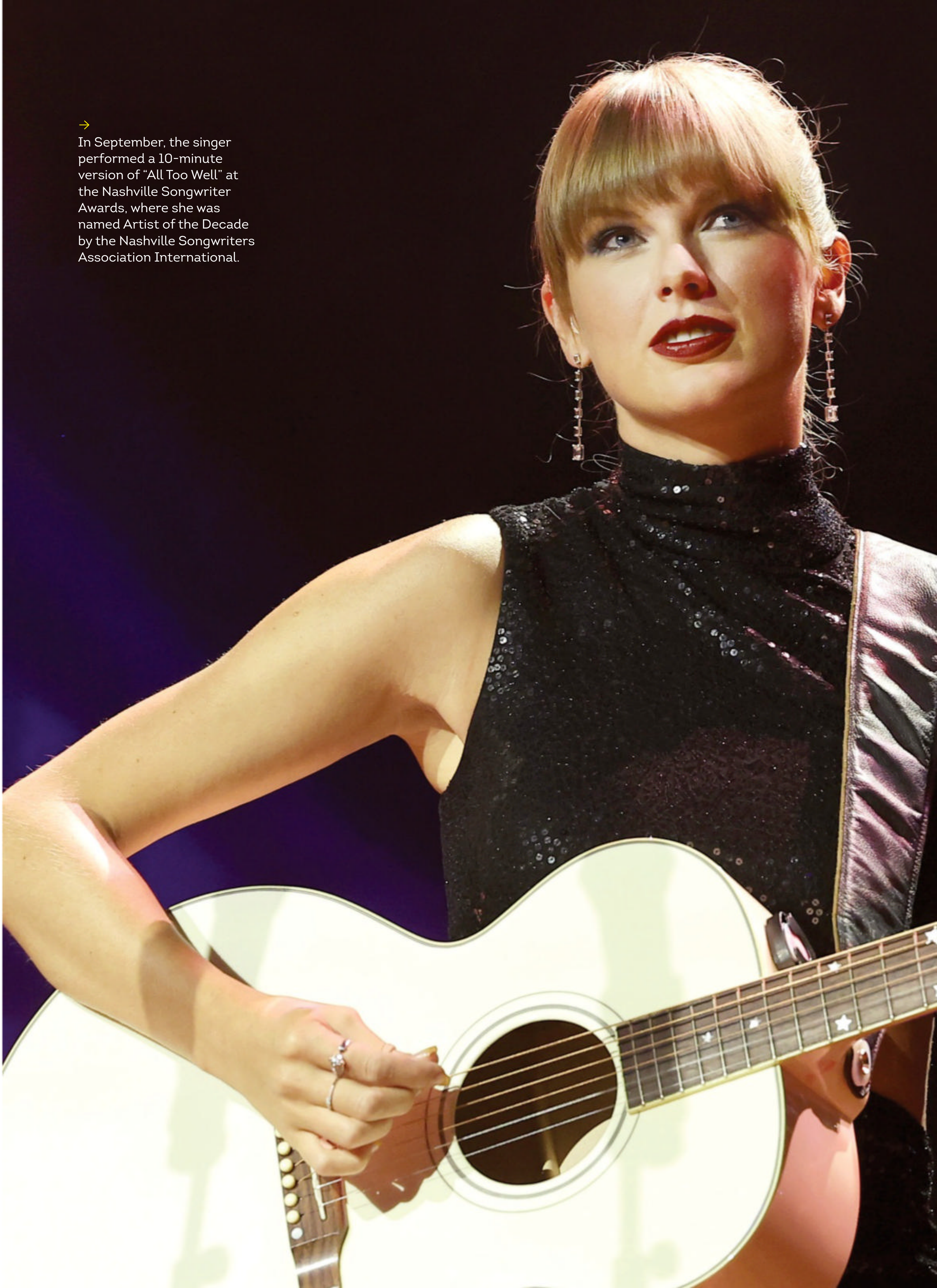

→
In September, the singer performed a 10-minute version of “All Too Well” at the Nashville Songwriter Awards, where she was named Artist of the Decade by the Nashville Songwriters Association International.

MUSIC SPOTLIGHT™

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

TAYLOR SWIFT

FIERCE. FEARLESS. FANTASTIC!

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TAYLOR SWIFT

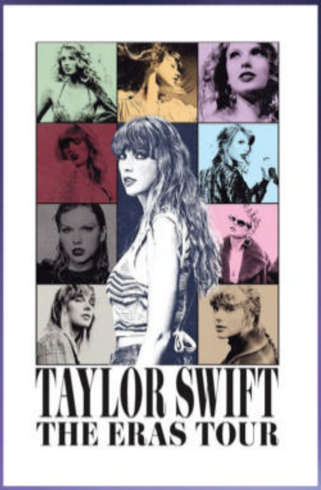
No one in entertainment does it like this superstar. With 10 hit albums, 536 awards, 239 million followers on Instagram and 28 billion YouTube views, she's one of the biggest artists of the 21st century.

Taylor Swift puts the pop in pop culture: The 33-year-old hitmaker boasts a discography spanning multiple genres—from country to folk—that has sold an estimated 200 million records. As she continuously reinvents herself, she's also changing the industry for others: When the singer lost the rights to her first six albums, she decided to rerecord them all and reclaim her own art. After releasing *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* and *Red (Taylor's Version)* in 2021, signs point to the next rerecording as either *1989* or *Speak Now*. Somehow, she also found time to complete her 10th original studio album, *Midnights*, which was released Oct. 21, 2022.

She's also added filmmaker to her long list of accomplishments: *All Too Well*, the short film she wrote and directed based on her 2011 song, screened at the 2022 Tribeca and Toronto film festivals and has won multiple awards. Plus, in December she signed a deal to make her feature directorial debut from a script she wrote.

But as Swifties look forward to what's to come, this issue also shines a spotlight on Taylor's unparalleled career up to now. Explore each of her 10 albums and see the ranking of her top 40 music videos. Also, as she prepares to launch The Eras Tour, relive the magic of her first five outings. We trace her journey to Nashville, Tennessee, championed by the family and friends who helped her wildest dreams come true.

In May 2022, she was awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts from New York University. In her commencement address, she noted, "We are each a patchwork quilt of those who have loved us, those who have believed in our futures.... I will never be able to find the words to thank my mom and my dad, and my brother, Austin, for the sacrifices they made every day so I could go from singing in coffeehouses to standing up here with you all today."



← Taylor is scheduled to perform in 20 U.S. cities during The Eras Tour.

→
In 2022, Taylor's *evermore* was nominated for Album of the Year at the Grammys—the same award *folklore* won in 2021.

MISS AME

So much more than just a

→
She has always had a special connection with her fans, who are known as Swifties.

RICANA

singer, Taylor Swift is the pure embodiment of pop culture.

In an industry of cookie-cutter pop stars, Taylor Swift has broken the mold and continuously reinvented the concept of an entertainer. Over her two decades as a singer-songwriter, she's spanned genres, smashed records and perpetually kept her loyal legion of Swifties on edge in anticipation of her next (and possibly, surprise) album. Taylor writes her own songs, plays her own instruments, makes her own rules and speaks her own mind. Yet at 33, she's still learning as she goes.

Taylor received an honorary doctorate of fine arts from New York University in May 2022 and gave the commencement speech, in which she imparted "life hacks" she'd picked up during her unconventional coming of age as a teenager in the public eye. "I became a young adult while being fed the message that if I didn't make any mistakes, all the children of America would grow up to be perfect angels. However, if I did slip up, the entire Earth would fall off its axis and it would be entirely my fault and I would go to pop star jail forever and ever. It was all centered around the idea that mistakes equal failure and ultimately, the loss of any chance at a happy or rewarding life. This has not been my experience. My experience has been that my mistakes led to the best things in my life."

But so have things that were beyond her control. Taylor had to change course when the summer 2020 Lover Fest world tour was canceled amid the coronavirus pandemic. Isolating at home like the rest of us, she was even second-guessing her longevity as an artist, she admitted in a 2020 interview with Apple Music's Zane Lowe. As she passed the time in lockdown bingeing classic films and literature, she got lost in the stories from a time that no longer existed—and discovered a pathway for her future by shifting lyrical focus from her personal life to invented characters in a fictional American town. "I can reflect my own emotions onto what I think they may be feeling," she realized, without giving tabloids yet another story line.

But would people want to listen to that? Any fear that fans might reject the innovation was dispelled when Taylor dropped *folklore* at midnight on July 24, 2020; that same day, shocked Swifties streamed it a record-breaking 80.6 million times on Spotify. With that seal of approval, "My world felt

TAYLOR GOES HOLLYWOOD

THE SINGER IS SET TO DIRECT HER FIRST FEATURE FILM.

Will Taylor's next award be an Oscar? The singer has inked a deal with Searchlight Pictures to direct a feature film—for which she also wrote the screenplay. No word yet on the plot (or if it will be a musical), but the studio has complete faith in her ability behind the camera. "Taylor is a once in a generation artist and storyteller," Searchlight presidents David Greenbaum and Matthew Greenfield said in a statement. "It is a genuine joy and privilege to collaborate with her as she embarks on this exciting and new creative journey."

Taylor, who had minor roles in films such as *Cats* and *Amsterdam*, has already cut her teeth as a director, helming the productions of several of her music videos and a short film for the *Red (Taylor's Version)* track "All Too Well," for which she also wrote the storyline and dialogue. Her first effort, 2020's "The Man," came about as a fluke: She had wanted a female filmmaker to work on the shoot, but the few she reached out to were already booked. "So I was like, 'I could do it, maybe,'" Taylor recalled in a 2022 *Variety* interview. "And when I did direct, I just thought, 'This is actually more fulfilling than I ever could have imagined.'"

→ Taylor directed the video for her song "The Man," in which she played a male character in prosthetics.

Since then, she's directed most of her videos, including those for "Cardigan," "Anti-Hero" and "Bejeweled." And the new creative outlet has influenced her songwriting—and vice versa. "I definitely feel more free to create now," she said. "And I'm making more albums at a more rapid pace than I ever did before, because I think the more art you create, hopefully the less pressure you put on yourself... I'm happier when I'm making things more often."

At the 2022 MTV Video Music Awards, Taylor won three Moonman trophies for *All Too Well: The Short Film*, which she directed.

opened up creatively," she explained to Lowe. "I saw a lane for my future. It was a real breakthrough moment of excitement and happiness. I kind of referred to writing these songs as a flotation device." So she kept going: Five months later, she released a follow-up, *evermore*, her ninth album.

Her next would arrive sooner than anyone's wildest dreams. On Aug. 28, 2022, Taylor, accepting the MTV Video Music Award for Video of the Year, announced her 10th album: *Midnights*. "I thought it might be a fun moment to tell you…" she teased, pausing as the audience cheered. "I will tell you more at midnight." Sure enough, hours later, Taylor unveiled the cover art—the singer, wearing blue eyeshadow, holding a lighter up to her face—on social media. "*Midnights*, the stories of 13 sleepless nights scattered throughout my life," she captioned the post. "This is a collection of music written in the middle of the night, a journey through terrors and sweet dreams. For all of us who have tossed and turned and decided to keep the lanterns lit and go searching—hoping that just maybe, when the clock strikes 12…we'll meet ourselves."

When *Midnights* dropped on Oct. 21, 2022, fans around the world were wide awake and ready to devour the new music. If that wasn't enough, she also simultaneously released the music video for the first single "Anti-Hero." Within 24 hours, *Midnights* became the top-selling album of 2022. "I'm beside myself, really," Taylor admitted on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. "I'm feeling very overwhelmed by the fans' love for the record. I'm also feeling very soft and fragile," she added with a laugh. "The two can exist at once." In the same interview, Fallon asked the question on the minds of all Swifties: What about a *Midnights* tour? "I think I should do it," she teased.

But when? The answer came just days later when Taylor announced The Eras Tour, "a journey through the musical eras of my career (past and present!)," set to kick off on March 17, 2023 in Glendale, Arizona. Initially 27 dates across the U.S., demand was so high, another 17 shows were added for a total of 52, making Eras the biggest tour of her career. As such, a plan was in place to ensure verified fans took precedence over scalpers and bots—but Ticketmaster underestimated the power of Swifties: The morning of the presale, 14 million people logged on to snag tickets—and the site crashed. The day before the Nov. 18 general public sale, Ticketmaster pulled the plug due to "insufficient remaining ticket inventory to meet that demand."

As distraught fans aired their grievances on social media, Taylor joined the chorus to express her own frustrations with the "excruciating" situation. "I'm not going to make excuses for anyone because we asked [Ticketmaster], multiple times, if they could handle this kind of demand and we were assured they could," she said in a statement. "It's truly amazing that 2.4 million people got tickets, but it really pisses me off that a lot of them feel like they went through several bear attacks to get them. And to those who didn't get tickets, all I can say is that my hope is to provide more opportunities for us to all get together and sing these songs." (Fans knew it wasn't Taylor's fault: They continued to show their loyalty by keeping "Anti-Hero" at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 for eight weeks, surpassing the record the star had previously set with *1989*'s "Blank Space.")

Throughout her career, Taylor has had to make lemonade out of lemons. Over the course of her first few albums, as she evolved from country cutie to pop star, she felt the repercussions of opening up her private life to a public that was both adoring and admonishing. "I've had several upheavals in my career," she reflected to *Rolling Stone*. "When I was 18,

2022
Taylor Swift Midnights
Taylor Swift Midnights
I should not be left to my own devices

Lyrics from *Midnights* were unveiled on a Times Square billboard ahead of its 2022 release.

Fans clamored to see "The Taylor Swift Experience" exhibit at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles.

they were like, 'She doesn't really write those songs.' So my third album I wrote by myself as a reaction to that. Then they decided I was a serial dater—a boy-crazy man-eater—when I was 22. And so I didn't date anyone for, like, two years. And then they decided in 2016 that absolutely everything about me was wrong. If I did something good, it was for the wrong reasons. If I did something brave, I didn't do it correctly. If I stood up for myself, I was throwing a tantrum. And so I found myself in this endless mockery echo chamber."

The result was a self-imposed exile after *1989*. "Nobody physically saw me for a year," Taylor said in the 2020 documentary *Miss Americana*, which followed her transition phase, both professionally and personally. "And that was what I thought they wanted. I had to deconstruct an entire belief system, toss it out and reject it."

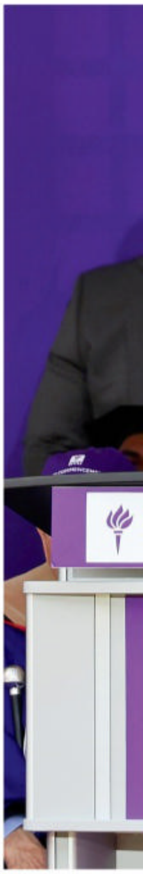
As she discovered her own voice, Taylor realized she could use it to speak up for others. She became politically active, after being advised early in her career to keep her thoughts to herself. She used her platform to speak out against Republican Rep. Marsha Blackburn, who was running for a Senate seat in Tennessee (Taylor's adopted home state). Blackburn had voted against LGBTQ rights and reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. "This was a situation where, from a humanity perspective, and from what my moral compass was telling me I needed to do," Taylor told *Variety*, "and I really didn't care about repercussions."

Conservative leaders ridiculed her—then-President Donald Trump publicly mocked her, saying, "I like Taylor's music about 25% less now." Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee scoffed on Twitter that her stance "won't impact [the] election unless we allow 13 yr old girls to vote." But Taylor's massive fan base was undeterred. "We are up to 65,000 [new voter] registrations in a single 24-hour period since T. Swift's post," said Kamari Guthrie, director of communications for vote.org. In the end, Blackburn narrowly beat out her Democratic opponent, but Taylor was hardly silenced—she was just starting to make some noise.

In 2021, she took on her biggest challenge to date when she lost the rights to her early musical catalog. Three years earlier, as her contract was expiring with Big Machine, Taylor sought to buy the masters of her first six albums released by the label. "Instead I was given an opportunity to sign back up to Big Machine Records and 'earn' one album back at a time, one for every new one I turned in," she revealed in a 2019 Tumblr post. "I walked away because I knew once I signed that contract, Scott Borchetta would sell the label, thereby selling me and my future. I had to make the excruciating choice to leave behind my past."

But she made peace with the disappointment as she signed a new deal with Republic Records. As she predicted, Borchetta did sell his Nashville-based independent label; however, "Never in my worst nightmares did I imagine the buyer would be Scooter [Braun]," Taylor continued. For years, she explained, the music manager for the likes of Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande had

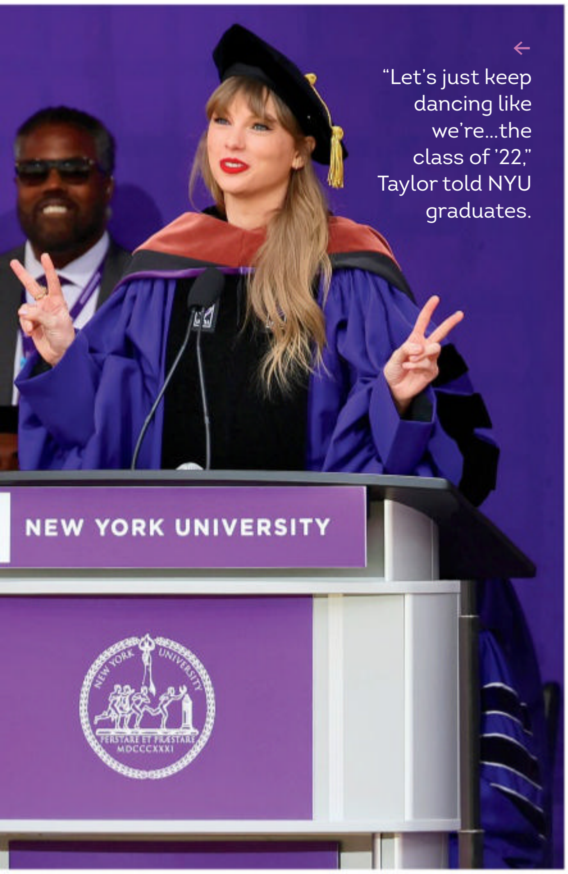
Wax figures of Taylor are on display at Madame Tussauds all over the world.



been an "incessant, manipulative bully" to her. And as he finalized the $330 million deal with Borchetta, "Essentially, my musical legacy is about to lie in the hands of someone who tried to dismantle it."

But Taylor realized she had full control of her future. To make Braun's ownership of her multimillion-dollar catalog not worth the paper it was printed on, she announced plans to rerecord all six albums (read more on page 16). It was a daunting task, but after her first "Taylor's Version," *Fearless*, in February 2021, she tweeted that she found the process to be "more fulfilling and emotional than I could've imagined."

A year later, standing before 50,000 people at Yankee Stadium addressing the NYU Class of 2022, it all came full circle. "I'm trying to tell you that losing things doesn't just mean losing. A lot of the time, when we lose things, we gain things, too."



← "Let's just keep dancing like we're…the class of '22," Taylor told NYU graduates.

By the Numbers

HOW TAYLOR'S MANY SUCCESSES HAVE ADDED UP TO ONE RICH MUSICAL CAREER.

$450 million

NET WORTH

- 11 Grammys*
- 40 American Music Awards
- 29 Billboard Music Awards
- 12 Country Music Association Awards
- 536 award wins* (out of 1,092 nominations)

*as of press time

6

WORLD TOURS

(Including 2023's The Eras Tour)

10

STUDIO ALBUMS

- 55 singles
- 200 million records sold
- 78 billion streams
- 59 music video appearances
- 28 billion YouTube views

240 million

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

92 GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

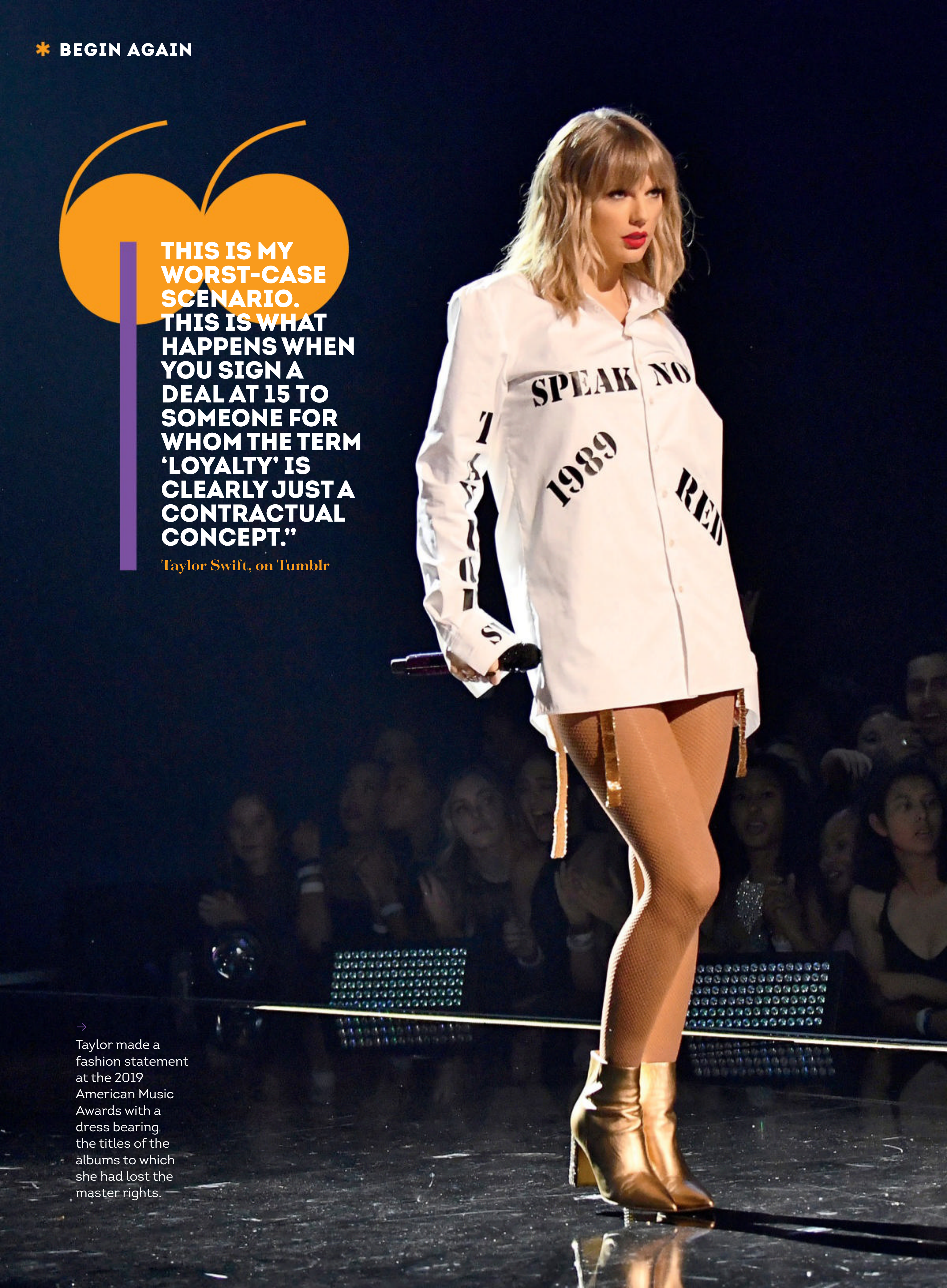
- Most Weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's Artist 100 Chart (51)
- Fastest-Selling Digital Album in the U.S. by a Female Artist (*Speak Now*)
- Most Viewed Vevo Video in 24 Hours ("Me!" with 65.2 million)
- Most No. 1s on the U.S. Digital Song Sales Chart (24)
- First act to debut at positions 1-10 simultaneously on the U.S. Hot 100

TOP OF POP

SINGER. SONGWRITER. MUSICIAN. CHART-TOPPER. NO ONE IN MUSIC DOES IT QUITE LIKE TAYLOR SWIFT: WITH A DISCOGRAPHY THAT SUCCESSFULLY (AND SEAMLESSLY) SPANS MULTIPLE GENRES, SHE'S ONE OF THE BESTSELLING ARTISTS OF ALL TIME.

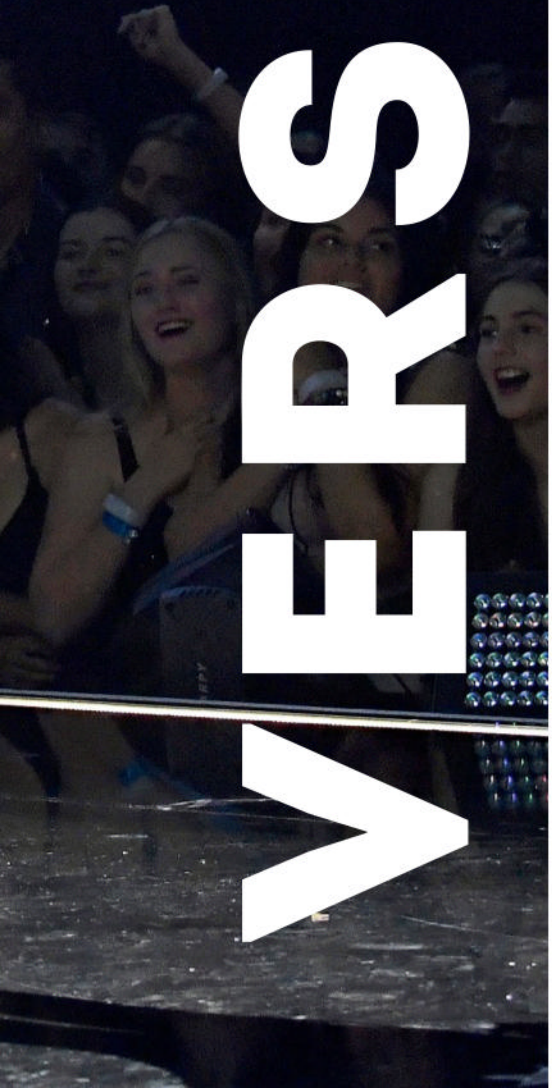
↑
The *Lover* era was a vibrant spectrum—from sound to style—and the antithesis of *Reputation*'s "nighttime" vibe.

> **“THIS IS MY WORST-CASE SCENARIO. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SIGN A DEAL AT 15 TO SOMEONE FOR WHOM THE TERM ‘LOYALTY’ IS CLEARLY JUST A CONTRACTUAL CONCEPT.”**
>
> Taylor Swift, on Tumblr



→ Taylor made a fashion statement at the 2019 American Music Awards with a dress bearing the titles of the albums to which she had lost the master rights.

Taylor's VERSION



One by one, she is rerecording her first six albums—and reinventing her own sound.

It took Taylor Swift 11 years to release her first six albums, but it looks like it will only take her a fraction of that time to rerecord them all. Motivated by Scott Borchetta's attempts to block her use of the songs in a medley performance at the 2019 American Music Awards (when she was named Artist of the Decade), she returned to the studio, and between making *folklore* and *evermore* in 2020, she completed her first "Taylor's Version," *Fearless*, her second album and the one that launched her to stardom in 2008.

The blast from the past perfectly blends with the future. Of the 26 songs, the 19 from *The Platinum Edition* and "Today Was a Fairytale" featured in the 2010 film *Valentine's Day* were recorded using the same producer (Nathan Chapman) and musicians who played on the original, and at the same Nashville, Tennessee, studio. As for the six previously unreleased "vault" tracks, which featured the guest vocals of Keith Urban ("That's When") and Maren Morris ("You All Over Me"), Taylor produced those with her *folklore* and *evermore* collaborators Jack Antonoff and Aaron Dessner.

"I really wanted to stay very loyal to the initial melodies that I had thought of for these songs," Taylor told *People* on April 9, 2021, the day she released *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*. "And so we really did go in and try to create a 'the same but better' version. We kept all the same parts that I initially dreamed up for these songs.... But yeah, I did go in line by line and listen to every single vocal and think, you know, what are my inflections here. If I can improve upon it, I did."

As expected, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* was a critical and commercial success—yet only the year's second-best selling country record. The first? *Red (Taylor's Version)*, which she dropped seven months later on Nov. 12. Arguably more popular than its predecessor, the rerecording got a bigger promotional push, buoyed by a short film written and directed by Taylor for the 10-minute version of "All Too Well," a fan favorite not released as a single back in 2012. The singer even hosted a premiere in New York City, which concluded with a surprise performance of the extended track for those in attendance at Lincoln Center. That weekend, she played it again for millions around the world on *Saturday Night Live*. "All Too Well" went on to debut in the top spot on Billboard Hot 100 and broke the Guinness World Record for longest No. 1 song in history.

The *Red* vault tracks also got a chance to shine. "Message in a Bottle" and "I Bet You Think About Me," featuring Chris Stapleton, were sent to pop and country radio, respectively, while the latter even got its own music video. Directed by Taylor's friend Blake Lively and produced by her brother, Austin Swift, it followed the singer as she caused a stir at the wedding of an ex, played by Miles Teller. Three of the nine songs "From The Vault" are actually well known by the most basic Swiftie: "Ronan," inspired by a

↑
In November 2020, a year after buying Big Machine from Scott Borchetta (at right), Scooter Braun sold off the master rights to Taylor's first six albums.

3-year-old boy who died from cancer and released as a charity single in 2012, as well as her own recordings of "Babe" and "Better Man," both of which Taylor wrote but gave away to country artists Sugarland and Little Big Town.

Although *Red (Taylor's Version)* was lumped into the 2021 "Sad Girl Autumn" trend started by Adele's *30*, fans were all too happy: The rerecording was Spotify's most-streamed album in a day from a female artist (90.8 million) and every one of its tracks appeared on the Billboard Global 200 chart. "Musically and lyrically, *Red* resembled a heartbroken person," Taylor explained in a social media post. "It was all over the place, a fractured mosaic of feelings that somehow all fit together in the end. Happy, free, confused, lonely, devastated, euphoric, wild, and tortured by memories past. Like trying on pieces of a new life, I went into the studio and experimented with different sounds and collaborators. And I'm not sure if it was pouring my thoughts into this album, hearing thousands of your voices sing the lyrics back to me in passionate solidarity, or if it was simply time, but something was healed along the way."

Opening 'The Vault'

WHAT NEVER-BEFORE-HEARD TUNES WILL SHE DROP NEXT?

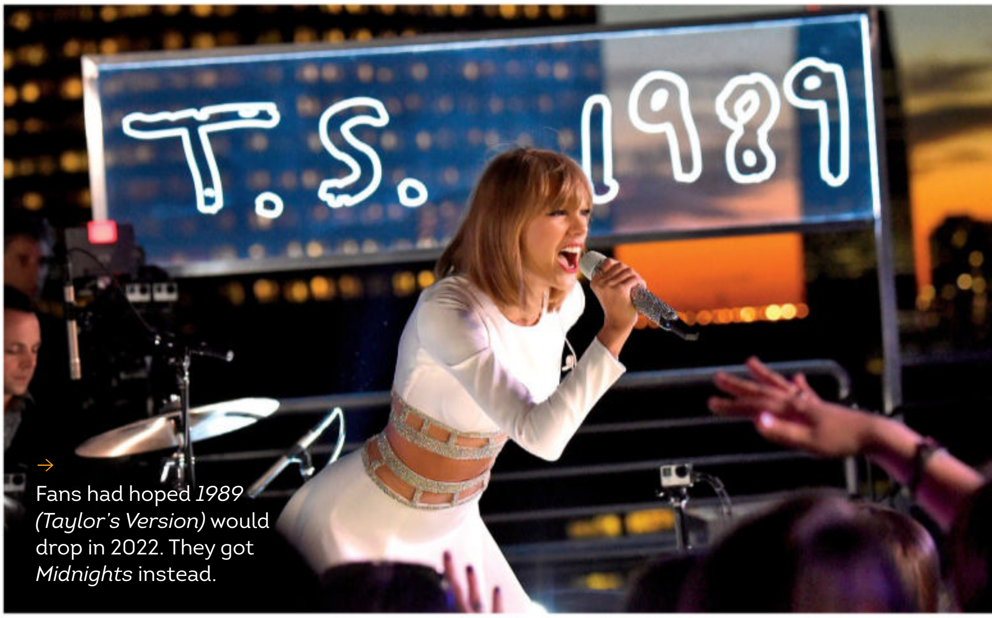
Taylor Swift is nothing if not prolific. In each of her rerecordings, she's gifted fans with several previously unreleased songs "From The Vault." For *1989*, the possibilities are endless, but one is a sure bet: "1989." The title track was written for the original album, but was mysteriously cut from the final version. As for *Speak Now*, in January 2023 she reportedly registered several songs with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) believed to be potential "vault" tracks, including "Castles Crumbling," which has long been linked to the *Speak Now* sessions.

Fan reaction to the rerecordings was amazingly positive, but the artist was especially moved by the support she received from one of music's biggest corporations. iHeartRadio, which operates more than 850 radio stations in the U.S., promised to swap out the Scooter Braun-owned hit songs for Taylor's new versions. "It's so heartwarming to me," she gushed on *The Graham Norton Show* in 2022. "This is something that I care about, but I don't expect other people to care about it."

WHICH ALBUM IS NEXT?

With the releases of *Fearless* and *Red*, that leaves four albums left to be rerecorded: *Taylor Swift* (2006), *Speak Now* (2010), *1989* (2014) and *Reputation* (2018). The chatter about which one would be next was temporarily shut down by the release of *Midnights*—but as fans look ahead to her career-spanning The Eras Tour, there's renewed speculation. Based on Easter eggs and other hints Taylor has dropped, general consensus among Swifties is that it will be either *Speak Now* or *1989*.

Throughout 2022, all signs pointed to *1989*, her pop crossover, as she had already breadcrumbed several select tracks to fans. In March 2021, a snippet of "Wildest Dreams" debuted in the trailer for *Spirit Untamed*, Dreamworks' animated film about a girl and her horse—which features the voice of Taylor's ex, Jake Gyllenhaal. When *Spirit Untamed* arrived in theaters, however, the song wasn't on the soundtrack. Never one to disappoint, after announcing *Red (Taylor's Version)*, she made everyone's wildest dreams come true by releasing "Wildest Dreams" in its entirety on all music platforms, immediately breaking single-day streaming records. On Spotify, the track racked up 2 million streams in four hours. On the Billboard Hot 100 chart, it became her 81st Top 40 entry, tying her with Elvis Presley for third place behind Lil Wayne (87) and Drake (143). Coincidentally (or not, knowing Taylor), a second hint at *1989* came courtesy of



→ Fans had hoped *1989 (Taylor's Version)* would drop in 2022. They got *Midnights* instead.

another animated film: *DC League of Super-Pets*, which featured a snippet of the rerecorded “Bad Blood.” But unlike “Wildest Dreams,” that was all fans got of the new version.

A third *1989 (Taylor’s Version)* track was also revealed via a Hollywood production: “This Love,” featured in the trailer for the Amazon Prime series *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. “I’ve always been so proud of this song,” wrote Taylor, adding that she was emotional “about this turn of events.” At midnight on May 6, “This Love” dropped and the singer was bursting with sentimentality. “I’m currently reliving the *1989* tour in my head and spiraling, it’s fine,” Taylor captioned a photo of the cover art, a close-up shot of her red lips and windswept hair. She also released a lyric video, which displayed the words scrolling across seaside scenery, a nod to the cover of *1989*, on which Taylor wears a sweatshirt embroidered with seagulls.

During the *Red (Taylor’s Version)* era, there were even more Easter eggs pointing in the direction of *1989* over *Speak Now*. In the short film for the 10-minute version of “All Too Well,” the two main characters (Sadie Sink and Dylan O’Brien, portraying Swift and Gyllenhaal) drive upstate in a 1989 Mercedes-Benz. In a later scene, Taylor plays the grown-up version of Sink’s character, an author who wrote a novel titled *All Too Well*. Its cover, fans pointed out, closely resembles Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*—and “Wonderland” is a *1989* track. As fans buzzed on social media, Taylor jumped in to stoke the flames. “Can’t stop won’t stop being cryptic and weird,” she commented on a fan’s TikTok about the parallel in November 2021. “That’s just the beginning.”

Yet fans continued to wait for *Taylor’s Version*. A possible reason for its holdup was an ongoing lawsuit by songwriters accusing her of lifting lyrics from their 2001 track “Playas Gon’ Play” for the *1989* lead single “Shake It Off.” Fortunately for both Taylor and Swifties, on Dec. 12, 2022, a judge dismissed the case—opening the door for the rerecording’s release, free of any overshadowing controversy. Sure enough, the very next day, Taylor spent her 33rd birthday in the studio with *1989* producer Jack Antonoff. The obvious connection: *1989* is named after the year she was born on Dec. 13.

But despite all the nods at her first official pop collection, *Speak Now* would like a word. Taylor’s third album is repeatedly alluded to in the 2022 music video for *Midnights*’ “Bejeweled”—which dropped on the 12th anniversary of *Speak Now*’s 2010 release. As the visual opens, we can hear an instrumental rendition of that album’s “Enchanted.” Next, Taylor enters an elevator with color-coded buttons: purple, the hue commonly associated with *Speak Now*, is assigned to floors 3 (which she presses) and 13. If *Speak Now* is indeed the next *Taylor’s Version*, that would also make it her 13th album. As the video comes to a close, she winks at the camera while wearing a barrette spelling out “SN.” And if that wasn’t enough, she’s standing on a castle balcony that’s an exact replica of the one from her Speak Now World Tour—as another instrumental, *Speak Now*’s final track “Long Live,” plays out over the credits.

ALL TOO WELL

←
In 2022, Taylor’s short film, *All Too Well*, screened at the Tribeca Festival.

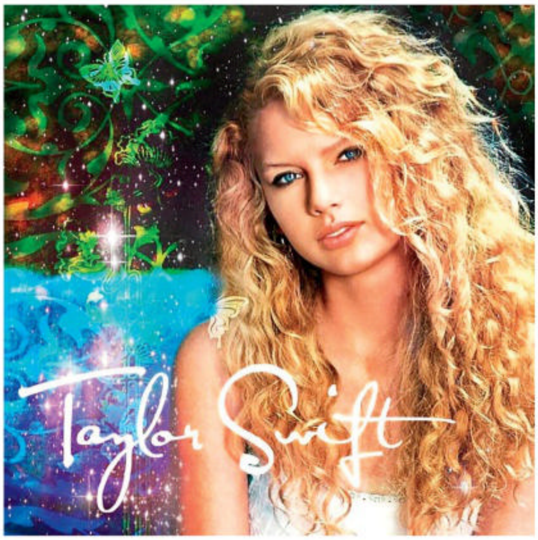
↓
She performed the 10-minute song on *Saturday Night Live* on Nov. 13, 2021.

> **IT’S A LOT OF WORK, BUT IT’S A LOT OF FUN AND REWARDING FOR ME AND I CAN’T BELIEVE PEOPLE HAVE ACTUALLY GOTTEN BEHIND IT THE WAY THAT THEY HAVE.”**
>
> Taylor, on the rerecordings, to Graham Norton

→ Taylor wowed the audience at the Academy of Country Music Awards show in 2007. It was the first time she met Tim McGraw.

ERA by ERA

Each of the singer's 10 studio albums represents its own definitive sound, sensation and spot in music history.



TAYLOR SWIFT

Any stereotypes about country music were given the boot when a teenage girl from Pennsylvania arrived on the Nashville, Tennessee, scene. Instead of songs about beer and trucks, Taylor Swift wrote confessional lyrics that dealt with age-appropriate issues such as boys, friendships and insecurities.

Of the 11 tracks on *Taylor Swift*, she had her hand in all, even penning three on her own, including the Billboard Hot Country No. 1 singles "Our Song" and "Should've Said No." The debut collection not only went seven-times platinum, it was nominated for Album of the Year at the 2008 Academy of Country Music Awards, plus Taylor earned a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist (she lost to Adele).

Ahead of going into the studio with Nathan Chapman, who produced her demo, the 16-year-old had her debut album all planned out. "When I write a song I hear it completely produced in my head. I know exactly where I want the hook to be and I know what instruments I want to use," said Taylor, according to the biography *Every Day Is a Fairytale*. "One of my favorite things to do is to sit around and obsess about how my music is going to sound. A lot of that goes on in the days following me writing a song."

As she explained it, Taylor would next meet with Chapman and sing him the hook, and together they'd decide which instruments to incorporate (*Taylor Swift* has lots of banjos and fiddles). Even after she recorded a track, the work wasn't done. "I leave the studio, but I don't put it down. I don't stop listening and I don't stop tweaking and critiquing."

Her perfectionism made it easy for Big Machine Records' Scott Borchetta to select a lead single. The moment he heard a song titled "When You Think Tim McGraw," "that was that moment of 'Oh my God,'" the label exec marveled in an interview with NBC's *Dateline*. "And the grenade dropped in the still pond." Shortened to "Tim McGraw" (with whom she later went on tour), the single went double platinum and introduced the world to an ambitious girl named Taylor Swift, who had plenty more catchy tunes—all four of her follow-up singles hit the Top 10 on Billboard's Country Songs chart, with "Teardrops on My Guitar" and "Our Song" selling more than 3 million copies each.

Critics were equally impressed by the newcomer. "Nashville has made several attempts in the last few years to launch a teen star, with mostly disappointing results" but Taylor "beat the jinx," proclaimed *Country Weekly*. "The more thoughtful material suggests a talent poised to last well past high school."

Indeed, just months after dropping her first album, Taylor was preparing for her second—and third. "I've been very selfish about my songs," she revealed to CMT. "I had this dream of this project coming out for so many years now that I just stockpiled."

> **"TAYLOR KNOWS JUST WHO SHE IS.... SHE KNOWS WHO SHE WANTS TO BE AND WHERE SHE FITS IN THIS BIG THING CALLED THE MUSIC BUSINESS."**
>
> Producer Nathan Chapman

RELEASE DATE OCT. 24, 2006 **SINGLES** "TIM McGRAW," "TEARDROPS ON MY GUITAR," "OUR SONG," "PICTURE TO BURN," "SHOULD'VE SAID NO" **ALBUMS SOLD** 7.3 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** THE TEEN WROTE 40 SONGS FOR HER DEBUT ALBUM.

Taylor Swift
FEARLESS

FEARLESS

By the time Taylor entered the studio to record the follow-up to her mega-successful debut, she had plenty of material: 75 songs. Although a popular country star, she was dealing with the same hardships as any other 17-year-old, especially heartbreak. She intended for her lyrics to reflect relatable issues, and the beauty in embracing and overcoming them. "[Being] fearless doesn't mean you're completely unafraid and it doesn't mean that you're bulletproof," she told MTV News. "It means that you have a lot of fears, but you jump anyway."

> **MY FEAR IS THAT SHE'LL CONQUER THE WORLD BY THE TIME SHE'S 19. SHE'LL GET TO THE MOUNTAINTOP AND SAY, 'THIS IS IT?' "**
>
> Scott Borchetta

Indeed she did—and wholeheartedly. Immediately following her tour with George Strait, the songwriter headed into the studio with producer Nathan Chapman and a notebook full of lyrics. Within eight months, the duo had completed the 13 songs that would comprise *Fearless*—with one track barely making it in time. The day before she had to turn in the final product, she begged Scott Borchetta to let her record "Forever & Always," about the end of her relationship with Joe Jonas. "This song starts with this pretty melody that's easy to sing along with," Taylor explained to the *Los Angeles Times*, "then in the end...I'm basically screaming it because I'm so mad. I'm really proud of that."

The album as a whole is 53 minutes of radio-friendly tracks, with sprinkles of pop among the country-lite sound, such as "Love Story," inspired by the saga of Romeo and Juliet. The lead single off *Fearless*, it was the first country song to top the Billboard Mainstream Top 40 chart; it went on to sell 18 million copies worldwide. Likewise, Taylor's third offering, the seven-times platinum "You Belong With Me," fared better on pop radio, peaking at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100.

At the 2010 Grammys, the song received nominations for Song of the Year, Record of the Year and Best Female Pop Vocal Performance. On Music's Biggest Night, the 20-year-old took home four awards, including Album of the Year, making her the youngest person ever to receive the honor. (In 2020, Billie Eilish, who was 18 at the time, went on to break that record.)

Riding high on the early success, Taylor set out on her first headlining tour: 15 months around the world with stops in North America, Europe, Australia and Japan, with Justin Bieber and Kellie Pickler as her supporting acts. Describing it as a "dream come true" in her announcement, Taylor promised to put on a show that would elevate her musical storytelling—and tickets sold out within minutes (read more on page 38).

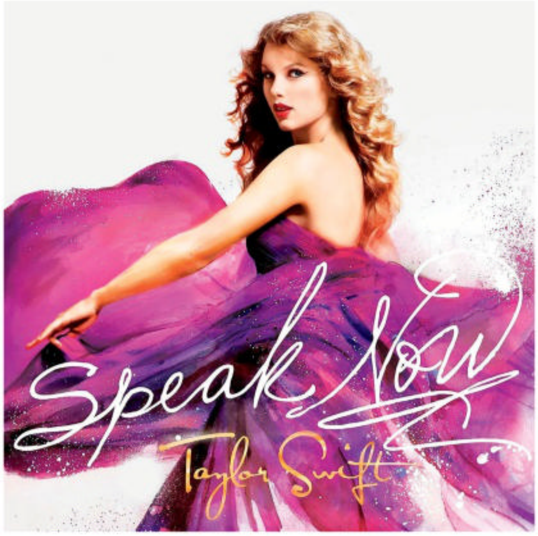
For Taylor, *Fearless* was her definitive coming-of-age moment. As the *Los Angeles Times*' Randy Lewis put it after previewing the sophomore effort: "As a whole, *Fearless* represents a major advance in her confidence and acumen as a songwriter and evinces complete faith in her conversational vocal style, one that positions her as the celebrity teen that other girls would most like to hang out with and the one most boys would want to ask to the prom."

RELEASE DATE NOV. 11, 2008 **SINGLES** "LOVE STORY," "WHITE HORSE," "YOU BELONG WITH ME," "FIFTEEN," "FEARLESS"
ALBUMS SOLD 11.9 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** *FEARLESS* SPENT 35 WEEKS AT NO. 1 ON THE COUNTRY CHARTS.

→
Five tracks from *Fearless* peaked in the Top 10 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart.

On *Speak Now*, “the songs come from her heart,” said *Billboard*'s Keith Caulfield.

> **“EVERY SINGLE SONG IS LIKE A ROAD MAP TO WHAT THAT RELATIONSHIP STOOD FOR, WITH LITTLE MARKERS…LITTLE HINTS.”**
>
> Taylor Swift, to Yahoo! Music



SPEAK NOW

True to its title, Taylor's third album signals the young artist maturing from the fairy tales of *Fearless* to the pitfalls of spending nearly two years on the road—and not being able to verbalize her feelings at times. As with her previous two albums, the title borrows from one of its tracks that sums up the overall theme. "I just kept going back to 'Speak Now,' because I think it's such a metaphor, that moment where it's almost too late, and you've got to either say what it is you are feeling or deal with the consequences forever," Taylor explained to Yahoo! Music. "And I feel like that's such a metaphor for so many things that we go through in life, where you can either say what you mean or you can be quiet about it forever. And this album seemed like the opportunity for me to speak now or forever hold my peace."

And speak she did. Over the 14 tracks, Taylor takes on heartbreak ("Dear John") and being the heartbreaker ("Back to December"), fleeting moments and missed connections ("Enchanted"), bullies ("Mean"), love rivals ("Better Than Revenge") and navigating adulthood ("Never Grow Up"). And this time around, the 20-year-old penned all the lyrics herself. While on the Fearless Tour, "I'd get my best ideas at 3 a.m. in Arkansas, and I didn't have a cowriter around so I would just finish it," Taylor told Songwriter Universe. "That would happen again in New York and then again in Boston and that would happen again in Nashville." As she wrote, she tried out the new material in real time. "Sparks Fly" only made it to the set list twice, but it was memorable to fans, many of whom specifically asked about it during meet and greets.

For her third time in the studio, recording was a well-oiled machine, yet Taylor insisted on pushing the envelope. Not only did she incorporate different genres of music, such as pop-punk and bluegrass, she experimented with a string section on several songs, such as the goth-rock "Haunted." As with her previous two releases, Taylor had a very specific, structured rollout in mind—which completely went out the window after *Speak Now*'s lead single, "Mine," leaked two weeks ahead of schedule. Initially devastated, she decided to roll with it and rush the track to iTunes, where it went right to No. 1. When *Speak Now* dropped two months later, all but three of the tracks charted on Billboard's Hot 100 its debut week, making Taylor the first female artist to have 11 songs on the list at the same time.

With first-week sales of over 1 million—more than 60 other titles on the chart combined—*Speak Now* roared as the fastest-selling new album in five years, an especially impressive feat given the changing climate in the industry: As more and more music-download platforms emerged, physical sales had plunged over 50% over the past decade. So not only was Taylor breaking records, she was radically shattering them.

But that was only the beginning. In the second week of promotion, a typical day began at 4:30 a.m. to perform on a morning show, followed by a rush to a midday radio event, then a late-night program taping and finally, a meet and greet with fans in the evening.

Any exhaustion was canceled out by her satisfaction with *Speak Now*. "I'm really excited about everything that has to do with telling people about this album, because I'm just so proud of it," she revealed to *Entertainment Weekly*. "It's definitely something you have to go into saying to yourself, 'I will not get tired. I will not complain.' Because this is me going into it knowing that I'm going to work harder and faster and longer days than I will at any other point in the next two years. This is what I'm going to be now."

RELEASE DATE OCT. 25, 2010 **SINGLES** "MINE," "BACK TO DECEMBER," "MEAN," "THE STORY OF US," "SPARKS FLY," "OURS"
ALBUMS SOLD 6.9 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** THE ORIGINAL TITLE FOR *SPEAK NOW* WAS *ENCHANTED*.

RED
TAYLOR SWIFT

RED

When Taylor sat down to write her fourth album, all she could see was *Red*—burning red. The color represented a range of intense emotions from passion to heartbreak, and she would explore it all on her "only true breakup album" following her much-publicized split from Jake Gyllenhaal.

By this time, the country star had been experimenting with her sound, and as a metaphor for how messy a real breakup can be, she wanted her new music to also be all over the place with each song having its own singular distinction. To achieve that, she worked with a wide range of producers from all genres, including Swedish pop hitmakers Max Martin and Shellback, as well as musicians she admired, such as Dan Wilson of 1990s one-hit wonder Semisonic ("Closing Time"), rock singer-songwriter extraordinaire Butch Walker and Snow Patrol's Jacknife Lee. "Track to track, there's nothing similar about anything on this record," Taylor told *Time*, "and that's what makes it so exciting."

From the 30 songs she wrote, Taylor recorded 20 before whittling down the final cut to 16. The first single, "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," put a fun spin on the end of a back-and-forth relationship, making the listener want to dance instead of sit around and mope. It was the same energy on "I Knew You Were Trouble," the third single, her take on a toxic relationship featuring a dubstep-fused refrain. Originally written as a piano ballad, Taylor approached Martin and Shellback with an odd request: "I want to make it sound as chaotic as that emotion felt," she recalled to *Time*. "It's one of the most adventurous songs on the record, soundwise. I love it."

Among the many pop bops, the album includes a handful of moderate-tempo tracks. Country-tinged second single "Begin Again" finds Taylor moving on after heartbreak, while the folkie "Everything Has Changed," a duet with Ed Sheeran, is more of a guitar ballad and captures "the feeling of when you first meet someone and all of a sudden the way that the world looks to you changes," Taylor told *Metro* after the song leaked ahead of *Red*'s official release. "Everything looks different to you because of this one person, because one new person came into your life. It's really cool."

Red turned to green for Taylor—it debuted at No. 1 (her third consecutive album to do so) and sold 1.2 million copies in its first week. It also spent seven weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, making Taylor the first female artist (and the first artist since The Beatles) to have three consecutive studio albums each spend at least six weeks at the top of the chart.

Red won big at the American Music Awards, Billboard Music Awards and Academy of Country Music Awards—but not Album of the Year at the Grammys. Taylor was so bummed by the loss (to Daft Punk for *Random Access Memories*), she skipped the show's after-parties to drown her sorrows in comfort food. "I went home and I cried a little bit and I got In-N-Out Burger and ate a lot," she joked to MTV News.

Although Taylor never officially named her muse, she did reveal she and Gyllenhaal made peace after *Red* was released. Recounting their conversation to *New York* magazine, she said the mystery ex told her: "'I just listened to the album, and that was a really bittersweet experience for me. It was like going through a photo album.' That was nice. Nicer than, like, the ranting, crazy emails I got from this one dude. It's a lot more mature way of looking at a love that was wonderful until it was terrible, and both people got hurt from it—but one of those people happened to be a songwriter. So what are you going to do? Did you not Wikipedia me before you called me up?"

RELEASE DATE OCT. 22, 2012 **SINGLES** "WE ARE NEVER EVER GETTING BACK TOGETHER," "BEGIN AGAIN," "I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE," "22," "RED," "EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED" **ALBUMS SOLD** 8.8 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** "ALL TOO WELL" WAS THE FIRST SONG SHE WROTE FOR THE ALBUM.

→ *Red* surpassed Garth Brooks' 1998 *Double Live* as the all-time fastest-selling country album.

> **“*RED* [IS] WHERE SHE PROVED HERSELF NOT JUST THE SUPREME POP SONGWRITER OF HER GENERATION, BUT ONE OF THE ALL-TIMERS.”**
>
> *Rolling Stone*

→ At the 2015 Billboard Music Awards, Taylor won eight of her 14 nominations.

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Taylor Swift
1989

1989

After four crossover country-pop albums, Taylor went all in on her fifth. Named for the year of her birth, *1989* was a modern take on the synth-pop sounds that defined a decade best remembered for crimped hair and neon fashion. For inspiration, the 20-something looked to '80s artists she grew up on, such as Madonna, Annie Lennox, Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins.

1989 was years in the making. As she had long dreamed of releasing a pop album, she noted every lyric, chord and melody that crossed her mind. When the time came to record with Martin and Shellback—the biggest pop hitmakers at the time, whom she'd also worked with on *Red*—her iPhone was filled with hundreds of voice memos that either laid the foundation for a song, or wrote it completely. Such was the case on "I Know Places," a collaboration with Jack Antonoff. After coming up with an instrumental, he sent it to Taylor, who was on a plane at the time. Thirty minutes later, she replied with a voice memo containing the lyrics. "Both of us were just freaking out," she revealed on *Good Morning America*. "I think it's the greatest example of the sound of this album."

And the attitude was essentially IDGAD. After years of being scrutinized and teased for every move she made, Taylor exuded a carefree vibe—which she introduced on the first single, "Shake It Off." As she explained to MTV News, she wanted to write an anthem so irresistibly fun that it would pack dance floors. And to prove it, Taylor "made the moves up as I go" in the accompanying music video, lampooning her own two left feet among ballerinas, cheerleaders and break-dancers.

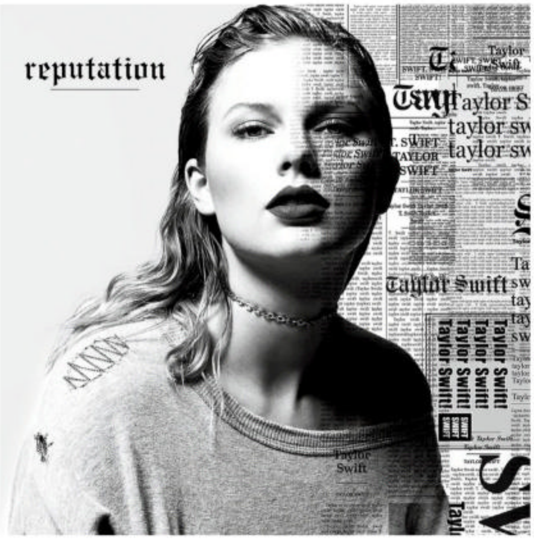
But she wasn't done with the self-deprecation. The second single, "Blank Space," satirized the characterization of her as a serial-dating "nightmare dressed like a daydream," which she felt overshadowed (and diminished) her talent. But the spoof didn't always land—and inadvertently perpetuated the misperception. "Half the people got the joke; half the people really think that I was like, really owning the fact that I'm a psychopath," she told NME. Although she doesn't take down any exes, she did put a former pal in the crosshairs on the uncharacteristically angry "Bad Blood."

With *1989*, it was undeniable Taylor had a future in mainstream pop. First-week sales were nearly double what industry experts predicted, as the album held the No. 1 spot on the Billboard 200 for 11 consecutive weeks—and remained in the Top 10 for an entire year (it stayed on the chart for 404 weeks). Her colleagues were fans too, as *1989* earned top honors at the Grammys, American Music Awards, iHeartRadio Music Awards and Billboard Music Awards.

Reflecting on the commercial success a year later, Taylor revealed her evolution went far beyond the music. "*1989* was essentially a celebration," she told MTV News. "I had new adventures and everything."

> **FOR ANYONE WHO STILL CHERISHED HER AS A COUNTRY STARLET WITH A CRUSH ON TIM McGRAW, THIS WAS A GAME CHANGER."**
>
> *Entertainment Weekly*

RELEASE DATE OCT. 27, 2014 **SINGLES** "SHAKE IT OFF," "BLANK SPACE," "STYLE," "BAD BLOOD," "WILDEST DREAMS," "OUT OF THE WOODS"
ALBUMS SOLD 14.3 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** SALES OF "WELCOME TO NEW YORK" WERE DONATED TO THE CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.



REPUTATION

As gossip swirled about everything from her love life to her feud with Kanye West and Kim Kardashian, it was time for Taylor to set the record straight—and reclaim her *Reputation*. As she began writing her sixth album, that was her sole inspiration. "The only time I ever started with a title was *Reputation*," she said at a YouTube Live event. "That was the only time I started an album with a title so I began writing songs around that word." The black-and-white cover image also reflected the theme: The cutesy pop star had received an edgy makeover with dark lipstick, a distressed T-shirt and a choker, with half of her face and body shaded by newspaper headlines reporting on her good name.

But *Reputation* is not somber. Boosted by a soundtrack heavy with EDM and electro-pop (with a smattering of hip-hop), the majority of the 15 songs are worthy of a dance party, even if the lyrics seem anything but. And the games begin the moment you hit play, with the appropriately titled "...Ready for It?" "Knew he was a killer first time that I saw him," sings Taylor as she paints a scenario of vendettas, thieves, heists and jailers and a happily ever after on a remote island with the "[Richard] Burton to this [Elizabeth] Taylor." Forgoing her usual title track, she worked "reputation" into the hook of "End Game," a collaboration with Ed Sheeran and rapper Future.

It wouldn't be a Taylor Swift album without an introspective ballad, and this one is just her and a piano. On "New Year's Day," the closing track, she romanticizes the mundane chore of cleaning up after a house party with someone she hopes will never "become a stranger whose laugh I could recognize anywhere"—a line she had been holding onto for years, waiting for the right moment (and person). It came after she hosted a 2016 New Year's Eve celebration in London with new boyfriend Joe Alwyn (read about their relationship on page 62). "I was thinking about how everybody talks and thinks about who you kiss at midnight," Taylor explained at a *Reputation* listening party. "Like it's this big romantic idea.... But I think there's something even more romantic about who's gonna deal with you on New Year's Day. Who's willing to give you Advil and clean up the house. I think that states more of a permanence."

Ahead of the album's release, the first single (and apparent Kardashian-West diss track), "Look What You Made Me Do," introduced the mood of *Reputation*—and a brand-new Taylor. In the bridge, as the music fades, an outgoing voice mail informs the listener: "I'm sorry, the old Taylor can't come to the phone right now. Why? Oh, 'cause she's dead." Indeed, her goal was to make the antithesis of *1989* and "kill" the pop record. But instead of a funeral, *Reputation* was a rebirth. "When it first came out everyone thought it was just going to be angry," she acknowledged to Entertainment Weekly. "Upon listening to the whole thing, they realized it's actually about love and friendship, and finding out what your priorities are."

Swifties were more than happy to follow Taylor to the dark side. *Reputation* shot straight to the top of the charts in countries throughout North America, Europe and Asia, making it the world's bestselling album by a female artist.

The Reputation Stadium Tour was such a jolt of positive energy, a reinvigorated Taylor immediately jumped into the studio to channel it into her next album. "I always look at albums as chapters in my life, and to the fans, I'm so happy that you like [*Reputation*]," she said at the 2018 American Music Awards, where she took home Best Pop/Rock Album. "But I have to be really honest with you about something: I'm even more excited about the next chapter."

RELEASE DATE NOV. 10, 2017 **SINGLES** "LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO," "...READY FOR IT?," "END GAME," "NEW YEAR'S DAY," "DELICATE," "GETAWAY CAR" **ALBUMS SOLD** 5.8 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** TO LET THE MUSIC SPEAK FOR ITSELF, SHE DIDN'T DO PRESS INTERVIEWS.

> **“I DIDN’T FEEL LIKE TALKING ABOUT IT. I JUST FELT LIKE MAKING MUSIC, THEN GOING OUT ON THE ROAD AND DOING A STADIUM TOUR AND DOING EVERYTHING I COULD FOR MY FANS.”**
>
> Taylor, to Refinery29 about the lack of press for *Reputation*

←
Taylor played a custom piano for two songs on the Reputation Stadium Tour.

→
Brendon Urie joined Taylor at the 2019 Billboard Music Awards to perform "ME!."

LOVER

After the dark tones of the *Reputation* era, everything was coming up pink glitter for Taylor on lucky No. 7. A 180-degree tonal shift, *Lover* is as dreamy and romantic as its title suggests: 18 tracks that celebrate all the emotions that come along with matters of the heart, ranging from infatuation (“Cruel Summer”) and passion (“False God”) to devastation for both parties (“Death by a Thousand Cuts,” “Afterglow”).

The album is also a love letter to oneself, represented by the lead single, “ME!,” a collaboration with Panic! at the Disco front man Brendon Urie that exclaims there’s no one better. It’s pure camp, but it’s catchy. “With a pop song, we have an ability to get a melody stuck in people’s heads, and I just want it to be one that makes them feel better about themselves, not worse,” Taylor told Vulture. Arguably not one of the album’s strongest offerings, “ME!” left fans and critics with mixed emotions.

But it was only the first tease of *Lover*—over the four months until its release, Taylor rolled out two more official singles (synth-pop “You Need to Calm Down” and lo-fi ballad “Lover”), as well as moody promotional track “The Archer,” exhibiting the collection’s diverse sound. Until Taylor wrote “Lover,” she intended to name the album after its closing track, “Daylight,” which shares a similar sentiment of a hopeful future. But sitting alone at her piano, as she hammered out verses to marry with the chorus in her head, “It just kind of happened immediately,” she revealed to *Rolling Stone*. “Then I took some time to write the bridge because I wanted to really level up with that bridge. That one would for me...be less of a ranting bridge and more of a story-time fable type bridge... ‘Can I go where you go / Can we always be this close forever and ever’ is less detailed, then when you go to the bridge and you realize like, oh, it just got really personal in the bridge. It expands on it all.”

You are what you love, and for Taylor, *Lover* represents who she is as an artist, buoyed by the “fundamental songwriting pillars that I usually build my house on,” she told *Rolling Stone*. “And there are a lot of very personal admissions in it. And also, I love a metaphor. I love building on the metaphor for a very long time. You know, the whole of *Reputation* was just a metaphor, but [*Lover*] is a very personal record.”

Even more rewarding for Taylor was the response to it. *Lover* was the bestselling studio album of 2019, making Taylor the world’s bestselling musician. When it took home Pop/Rock Album of the Year at the Billboard Music Awards, she was uncharacteristically at a loss for words as she received a standing ovation. “This album really felt like a new beginning,” said Taylor, referencing the dispute over her masters. Now with Republic Records, she made it a point to thank the label “for allowing me to make whatever music I want to make.”

IT’S REALLY HONEST; IT’S NOT ME PLAYING A CHARACTER. IT’S REALLY JUST HOW I FEEL, UNDISTILLED.”

Taylor, to *Rolling Stone*

RELEASE DATE AUG. 23, 2019 **SINGLES** “ME!,” “YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN,” “LOVER,” “THE MAN”
ALBUMS SOLD 4.8 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** AT 18 SONGS, *LOVER* IS HER LONGEST ALBUM.

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

FOLKLORE + EVERMORE

While millions around the world were baking bread during quarantine, Taylor was cooking up more music—two albums to be exact. The first, *folklore*, explored escapism, appropriately, as the multitalented artist experimented with new genres (folk-pop and alternative rock), lyrical imagery (ghosts and fictional towns) and collaborators (The National's Aaron Dessner and Bon Iver), and all recorded in secret. "The only people who knew were the people I was making it with, my boyfriend, my family and a small management team," Taylor revealed to *Entertainment Weekly*.

On July 23, 2020, she shocked locked-down Swifties with the announcement that her eighth album would drop at midnight. The 16 tracks, led by first single "Cardigan," was a collection that she had "poured all of my whims, dreams, fears and musings into," Taylor captioned the cover art on Instagram. "In isolation my imagination has run wild and this album is the result, a collection of songs and stories that flowed like a stream of consciousness."

In the first 24 hours, *folklore* shattered records with 72 million streams in the U.S. alone. The album was not only what Taylor needed to put out into the world, it was exactly what the world needed to hear, and it topped many 2020 best-of lists, including those of *Billboard*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Rolling Stone* and *Time*. But she wasn't done yet.

Taylor had another trick up her sleeve: *folklore*'s sister album, *evermore*, released just five months later. Continuing many of the same themes, she dug a little deeper—and a little darker. Many of the 15 tracks delved into not just love, but also loss, infidelity and grief.

"To put it plainly, we just couldn't stop writing songs," Taylor said in the announcement on Dec. 10, three days before her birthday. "To try and put it more poetically, it feels like we were standing on the edge of the folklorian woods and had a choice: to turn and go back or to travel further into the forest of this music.... I loved the ways you welcomed the dreamscapes and tragedies and epic tales of love lost and found into your lives. So I just kept writing them."

Naturally, fans kept listening. *evermore* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, her eighth consecutive chart-topping appearance, and stayed there for four weeks. And there truly was something for everyone: The album's three singles—"Willow," "No Body, No Crime" and "Coney Island"—impacted pop, country and alternative radio, respectively. As 2020 came to a close, "I've clung to the one thing that keeps me connected to you all," she admitted to fans on social media. "That thing always has and always will be music. And may it continue, evermore."

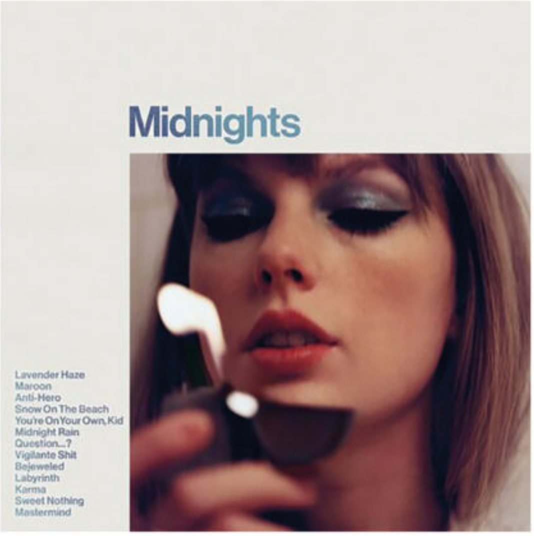
FOLKLORE RELEASE DATE JULY 24, 2020 **SINGLES** "CARDIGAN," "EXILE," "BETTY" **ALBUMS SOLD** 4.1 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** *WOODVALE* WAS THE ALBUM'S CODE NAME UNTIL ITS RELEASE. **EVERMORE RELEASE DATE** DEC. 11, 2020 **SINGLES** "WILLOW," "NO BODY, NO CRIME," "CONEY ISLAND" **ALBUMS SOLD** 2 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** TAYLOR'S BRAID HAS 31 TURNS TO REFLECT HER AGE.

> **“I’VE TOLD THESE STORIES TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY WITH ALL THE LOVE, WONDER AND WHIMSY THEY DESERVE.”**
>
> Taylor, on *folklore*

→ *folklore* surpassed Ariana Grande’s streaming record for “Thank U, Next.”

→ Leading up to *Midnights*' release, Taylor unveiled the tracklist on her TikTok series *Midnights Mayhem With Me*.

> **“LIFE CAN BE DARK, STARRY, CLOUDY, TERRIFYING, ELECTRIFYING, HOT, COLD, ROMANTIC OR LONELY. JUST LIKE *MIDNIGHTS*.”**
>
> Taylor, on Instagram



MIDNIGHTS

What keeps Taylor Swift up at night? Using that idea as "a creative writing prompt," she peeled back the covers for her 10th studio album, exploring five specific topics that have filled her mind during countless midnights: falling in love, falling apart, self-hatred, revenge fantasies and "wondering what might have been." And the sound echoes that moody vibe, with an ambient mix of synth-pop produced by a collection of vintage instruments, such as a Mellotron electronic keyboard and a Moog synthesizer (which might explain Taylor's 1970s styling in the album art).

So it only makes sense that Taylor joined forces with the queen of dream pop, Lana del Rey, on the track "Snow on the Beach," which the pair also cowrote, about the rare natural phenomenon of "falling in love with someone at the same time as they're falling in love with you," explained Taylor. *Midnights*' other random collaborator: Zoë Kravitz, who contributed lyrics and background vocals to album opener "Lavender Haze," an expression about "that all-encompassing love glow" that Taylor first heard on an episode of *Mad Men*. The guy she's presumably singing about, boyfriend Joe Alwyn, also lent his songwriting talents on "Sweet Nothing," a tender ode to their effortless relationship.

Originally described as 13 songs "forming a full picture of the intensities of that mystifying, mad hour," Taylor dropped another seven tracks, for a total of 20, three hours after midnight on Oct. 21. "There were other songs we wrote on our journey to find that magic 13," the singer explained on social media. "I'm calling them 3am tracks. Lately I've been loving the feeling of sharing more of our creative process with you, like we do with "From The Vault" tracks. So it's 3am and I'm giving them to you now."

No matter the hour, fans around the world binged *Midnights*—breaking and setting records in the process. In the first 24 hours, the album achieved the most streams ever on Spotify and Apple Music and topped the charts in 28 countries. Within the first week, it sold 1 million copies and spawned 10 Top 10 songs on the Billboard Hot 100, the most of any album in history, and lead single "Anti-Hero" became her ninth No. 1 hit. By the end of 2022, *Midnights* was the fastest-selling album of Taylor's career with over 6 million equivalent units worldwide. Critics agreed with fans, praising it as "an instant classic" (*Rolling Stone*), "confessional pop that's worth losing sleep over" (*Variety*) and "mastery of pop structure and style" (PopMatters).

Recorded on the heels of "storytime" albums *folklore* and *evermore* and back-to-back *Taylor's Versions* for *Fearless* and *Red*, *Midnights* ended up being her "first directly autobiographical" collection of new material in years. Working on it with those close to her—such as Alwyn, Kravitz, del Rey, "All Too Well" video star Dylan O'Brien (who played drums) and go-to producer Jack Antonoff—made it a "joyful experience," Taylor revealed on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. "This is a pretty dark album, but I'd say I had more fun making it than any album I've ever made. I don't think art and suffering have to be holding hands all the time... With time, and with the more albums I put out, making albums and writing things feels like a way to sort of suck the poison out of a snake bite."

RELEASE DATE OCT. 21, 2022 **SINGLES** "ANTI-HERO," "LAVENDER HAZE"
ALBUMS SOLD 6 MILLION **TAYLOR TRIVIA** TAYLORSWIFT.COM CRASHED UPON HER ANNOUNCEMENT OF *MIDNIGHTS*.

TOURS DE

Ever since Taylor Swift was a little kid, she'd imagined what it would be like to headline her own tour. As an opening act for Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, Rascal Flatts and Kenny Chesney, she studied the pros and picked up ideas for what she'd like to incorporate into a live show. But when she put out her debut album, the time didn't feel right just yet. "I never wanted to go into an arena and have to downsize it so there were only 5,000 or 4,000 people there," she told *The Victoria Advocate*. "So we waited a long time to make sure the headlining tour was everything I wanted the headlining tour to be"—and that was 2009's Fearless Tour.

After four more record-breaking tours—Speak Now World Tour, The Red Tour, The 1989 World Tour and Reputation Stadium Tour—she prepared for her greatest to date, 2020's Lover Fest. This one would reflect the "festival" feel of the album, with only 17 shows around the world and stops in countries she'd never played before, including Brazil, Portugal, Denmark and Poland. But the COVID-19 pandemic ultimately led to the cancellation of Lover Fest.

Now Taylor is heading back out on the road: On Nov. 1, 2022, she announced The Eras Tour, essentially a greatest-hits production that will revisit her entire 10-album catalog. "I can't WAIT to see your gorgeous faces out there," she said. The first day of the presale sold a record-breaking 2.4 million tickets—and the 52-date U.S. outing, which kicks off March 17 in Glendale, Arizona, is projected to gross $591 million, an all-time female record.

Until then, relive the magic—and sparkly costumes—of Taylor's first five tours!

> **“I CAN PLAY MORE MUSIC EVERY NIGHT THAN I EVER HAVE. HAVING WRITTEN MY OWN SONGS, THEY ARE ALL STORIES IN MY HEAD, AND MY GOAL FOR THIS TOUR IS TO BRING THOSE STORIES TO LIFE.”**
>
> Taylor Swift, in the Fearless Tour press release

→ "The Fearless Tour was so much fun and even more unforgettable than I ever imagined," Taylor revealed.

FORCE

No one puts on a show like Taylor: Check out the costumes, sets and special guests for her first five world tours.

FEARLESS

April 23, 2009–July 10, 2010

Shows | 89

Attendance | 1.2 million

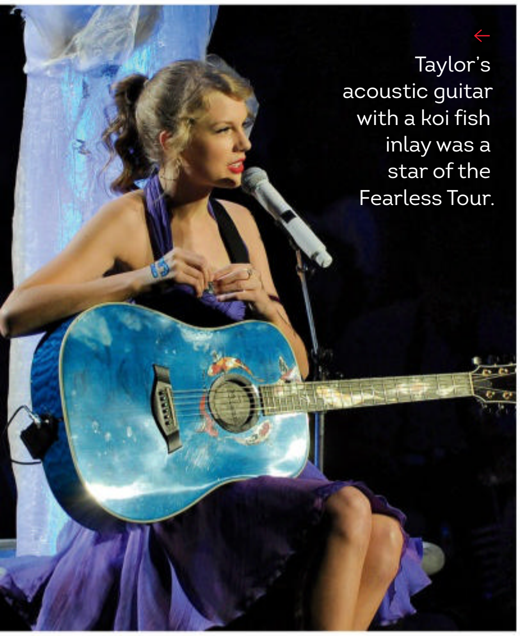
Opening Acts | Justin Bieber, Kellie Pickler, Gloriana

Revenue | $66.5 million

For Taylor's first concert tour, she had big ambitions: 54 cities throughout the United States and Canada, followed by dates in the U.K., Australia and Japan. The trip around the world was so successful—New York's Madison Square Garden and Los Angeles' Staples Center sold out in one and two minutes, respectively—she announced a second leg in North America.

The 90-minute set, which included pre-*Fearless* songs, opened with "You Belong With Me," as Taylor, dressed in a band uniform, performed on a stage decorated as a school, before the uniform ripped away to reveal a sparkly silver dress for "Our Song" and "Tell Me Why." The backdrop then changed to a library for "Teardrops on My Guitar" and "Fearless." During the second act, Taylor switched things up with acoustic renditions of "Fifteen" and "Tim McGraw" on a B-stage. Next, the show transformed into a Renaissance fair for "Love Story," followed by a mash-up of "You're Not Sorry" and Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around...Comes Around" before ending with "Should've Said No."

Fans who missed the spectacle could see it on *Journey to Fearless*, a three-part miniseries that aired on The Hub in October 2010 and was later released as a 135-minute DVD.



← Taylor's acoustic guitar with a koi fish inlay was a star of the Fearless Tour.

SPEAK NOW

Feb. 9, 2011–March 18, 2012

Shows | 111

Attendance | 1.6 million

Opening Acts | Needtobreathe, Hot Chelle Rae

Revenue | $123.7 million

Less than a year after coming off *Fearless*, Taylor was back on the road to support *Speak Now*—and this time, it was an extensive worldwide event in 19 countries, kicking off in Singapore and making its way through Asia, Europe, North America and Australia, before concluding in Auckland, New Zealand.

Most shows launched with "Sparks Fly," with Taylor dressed in a gold beaded mini and knee-high boots. While the 17-song set list was of course *Speak Now*-heavy, there were plenty of *Fearless* throwbacks like "Love Story," which closed out the show. The element that individualized each concert was a cover song—and usually with the original artist: "Super Bass" (Nicki Minaj), "Yeah!" (Usher) and "Who Says" (Selena Gomez). As Taylor explained it, many fans came to more than one concert, "and I want them to get a different experience every time."

Speak Now—2011's highest-grossing female and solo tour—was Taylor's first time playing stadiums and also the start of her tradition of scribbling lyrics on her left arm. Describing it as a "mood ring" for the show, the first selection was "You've got every right to a beautiful life" from "Who Says" by Gomez. Several of Taylor's North American performances were recorded and released as a concert film and live album, which debuted at No. 11 on the Billboard 200 chart.

TONIGHT
8.00 PM
LUCKY
ONE
TONIGHT
8.00 PM

↑ In honor of the tour, every night she sang into a red (and bedazzled) microphone.

RED

March 13, 2013–June 12, 2014

Shows | 86

Attendance | 1.7 million

Opening Acts | Ed Sheeran, Florida-Georgia Line, Neon Trees

Revenue | $150.2 million

Red was Taylor's most successful album to date, as was its supporting world tour, the highest-grossing by a country artist in history. Describing it as "a big representation" of the album, "I have so many ideas about how to really bring this music to life," she teased ahead of the opening two-night residency at Omaha, Nebraska's CenturyLink Center. "I can't wait to share the new show with all my fans!" And to ensure as many as possible were able to experience it, Taylor insisted every show offer tickets priced at under $50.

The 16-song set launched with "State of Grace"—the superstar, clad in black leather shorts and matching hat, emerging from behind a red curtain. It ended with a circus-themed encore of "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," with Taylor decked out in a bedazzled ringmaster costume. In addition to opening act Ed Sheeran coming out for a duet of their hit "Everything Has Changed," during the stop in Sacramento, California, she was joined by Snow Patrol's Gary Lightbody for their *Red* collaboration, "The Last Time." Taylor set a record at Staples Center with four sold-out shows (the most by any artist), during which Jennifer Lopez surprised the audience on the last night with "Jenny From the Block."

The Red Tour earned Top Package at the 2013 Billboard Touring Awards, with the trade magazine hailing it as an "overwhelming experience...that blended the pacing, the music and the artist's personality in a way that transfixed."

1989

May 5, 2015–Dec. 12, 2015

Shows | 85
Attendance | 2.28 million
Opening Acts | Shawn Mendes, Haim, James Bay, Vance Joy
Revenue | $250.7 million

By her fourth world tour, Taylor was a pro, yet she planned out The 1989 World Tour like it was her first outing: three months of music rehearsals, four weeks of stage rehearsals and 10 days of two-a-day dress rehearsals. When it kicked off, each stop was a well-oiled machine, with the unloading of 26 semitrailers and stage setup taking as little as six hours at arenas (longer at stadiums). The centerpiece was a propeller-style catwalk that Taylor designed based on her desire to be as close to as many fans as possible. Weighing 40,000 pounds, it could hold 13 people at a time—which turned the "Shake It Off" encore into a band dance party as confetti rained down.

> **I LOVE THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE... SO GOING INTO THIS TOUR, HAVING PEOPLE POP ON STAGE THAT YOU DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE."**
>
> Taylor, to Beats 1 Radio

But that was not the only epic performance on The 1989 World Tour. Following "Welcome to New York," "New Romantics" and "Blank Space," Taylor slipped into a glowing polka-dot top and skirt for "How You Get the Girl" while surrounded by dancers twirling neon umbrellas amid *Singin' in the Rain*-esque choreography. Select tracks from *Speak Now* and *Red* made an appearance; however, they received a synth-heavy makeover to complement *1989*'s sound. One of the standout moments was the most stripped down: a mash-up of "Enchanted" and "Wildest Dreams" Taylor performed on piano dressed in a sparkling catsuit and tulle skirt.

Thanks to social media, most fans knew what to expect each night, so Taylor dropped surprises where she could. Special guests included singers (John Legend, Joan Baez), actors (Julia Roberts), comedians (Chris Rock), athletes (the U.S. women's soccer team) and, of course, models. In London, squad members Karlie Kloss, Gigi Hadid, Kendall Jenner, Cara Delevingne and Martha Hunt turned the stage into a catwalk.

A cinematic experience, it was all captured in the Jonas Åkerlund-directed concert film *The 1989 World Tour Live*, which included two hours of concert footage as well as rehearsal and backstage footage, released exclusively on Apple Music. "The most challenging part of the year was being on-point for every show of a huge stadium tour," Taylor explained in a statement. "There was a lot to remember and balance with all the surprise guest performances, but it was worth it. I feel like we created memories I'll cherish for the rest of my life."

← There were several color combinations of Taylor's main costume.

→
T and her backup dancers matched in all black, with her in a glittery bodysuit.

REPUTATION

May 8, 2018–Nov. 21, 2018

Shows | 53
Attendance | 2.88 million
Opening Acts | Camila Cabello, Charli XCX
Revenue | $345.7 million

After three years off the road (and out of the limelight), Taylor made a triumphant return with the Reputation Stadium Tour—the highest-grossing ever in North America and the third-highest-grossing female tour of all time. (Ticket sales for Taylor's 2023 The Eras Tour broke both records.) Tickets went on sale on her 28th birthday, Dec. 13, 2017, six months before opening night in Glendale, Arizona. "This might be her most astounding tour yet," praised *Rolling Stone*. "Even when she's aiming for maximum stadium-rock razzle-dazzle bombast, she gives it all the vibe of a mass communion."

As she did for The 1989 World Tour, Taylor designed this tour's stage: one giant projector screen that changed for each song, providing a different background whether it was the snake from "Look What You Made Me Do" or the great escape of "Getaway Car." Matching the Gothic vibe of the album, the hues of her eight costumes were mostly dark, highlighted by a black hooded long-sleeve bodysuit for the opener "...Ready for It?" Perhaps hinting at the subsequent *Lover* era, the only color was a profusion of rainbow for "Shake It Off," a spirited performance on a smaller stage in the middle of the crowd with supporting acts Camila Cabello and Charli XCX.

With six albums of material, Taylor had to artfully weave fan favorites with *Reputation* tracks, resulting in several medleys—like "Style"-"Love Story"-"You Belong to Me"—for a 19-song set list. Surprises included Sugarland's appearance for "Babe," which Taylor wrote and performed live for the first time at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, the tour's closing night; it was also recorded and released for a Netflix concert special that New Year's Eve.

AXES TO GRIND

TAY'S TOUR GUITARS RANGE FROM A CRYSTAL-ENCRUSTED ACOUSTIC TO A RED SPARKLE LES PAUL.

Crown Jewel

During the *Fearless* era, Taylor strummed a custom acoustic that matched the album cycle's energy: a Taylor Grand Symphony, also known as the GS6, adorned with 5,400 Swarovski crystals, which she glued on herself (with help from mom Andrea). The guitar's body and neck are maple, with an ebony fretboard and abalone inlays. One of her most iconic six-strings, it made appearances during the tours for *Speak Now* and *Red*, but hasn't been seen since.

Miss Matched

Whenever Taylor wanted to rock out during *Fearless*, like on "Should've Said No," she did so with a black electric SB1-X guitar with silver pick guard from the same-named manufacturer Taylor Guitars. Custom-built for the superstar, the body is made of swamp ash, while the nut and saddle are bone. Unlike the rest of the glossy guitar, the neck is a satin finish, so it doesn't become slippery under the hot stage lights.

On Brand

A guitar she's had since childhood, the custom Taylor 914ce Grand Auditorium Presentation Series acoustic from the *Speak Now* era is made of koa wood and fitted with a Byzantine inlay in the neck—and of course, her famous name emblazoned in sparkly silver.

Seeing Red

Perhaps hinting at her next album, during the *Speak Now* era, Taylor debuted a shiny Gibson Les Paul with rosewood fretboard, mother-of-pearl trapezoid fret inlays and chrome tuning heads. In keeping with the vibe, when playing "Begin Again" on the tour for *Red*, she reached for an acoustic Taylor 614ce, made of solid maple with the back and sides finished in a hand-rubbed brown sugar satin.

Green Machine

Taylor loves a sparkly guitar, and for *Reputation*, she found a color that matched the serpentine flair of the tour. For the acoustic performances, she strummed a custom-colored Gibson J-185, changing out a few of the model's original features, such as star inlays on the fretboard and truss rod cover spelling out *rep* in the album's signature font.

Back to Basics

For her 2021 Grammys performance of "august" off *folklore*, Taylor went with a trusted friend: a black Gibson J-180 Special she has been playing since she borrowed it from none other than Madonna for their 2015 iHeartRadio Music Awards collaboration on the Material Girl's "Ghosttown." Over the years, Taylor has brought out the same acoustic guitar, with a rosewood fingerboard and mother-of-pearl star inlays, for solo performances at the Grammy Museum, NPR's Tiny Desk series and the 2022 Academy of Country Music Awards.

↓
The Taylor 914ce was her signature, literally.

↓
What else would she play on the Red Tour?

↓
On *Rep*, Taylor's Gibson J-185 took center stage.

↓
Taylor got electric with a SB1-X in the *Fearless* era.

→
"I think as a songwriter you need to have a completely wild imagination," says Taylor.

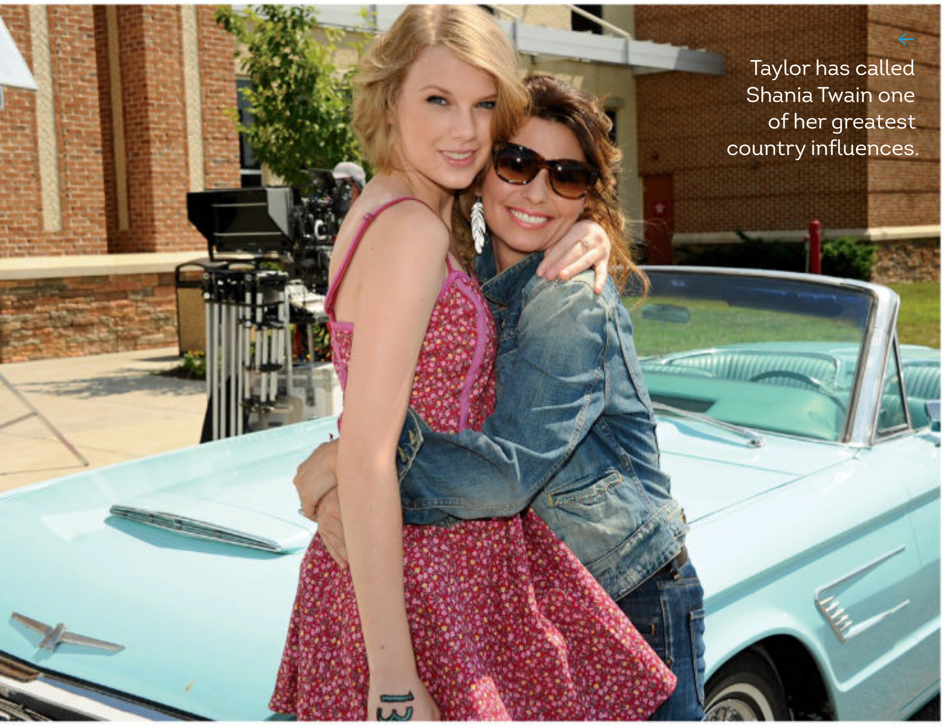
MUSIC & LYRICS

Everything you need to know about the artist's prolific songwriting: her influences, inspiration, imagery—and the method to her madness in the studio.

What has always set Taylor Swift apart from other pop stars is arguably her greatest asset: her songwriting. Her lyrics fuel every performance, as she sings the words that come straight from her heart—and a mind that is as productive as it is creative. It's also what resonates with her millions of fans around the world, as emotion becomes the universal language.

"When I go into the studio, it's really more about portraying the song in a way that gets the feeling across, rather than every phrase being exactly perfect," Taylor explained to the *Los Angeles Times*. "I think it's the writer in me that's a little more obsessed with the meaning of the song than the vocal technique."

That aspect of her process has changed very little over the past two decades, although the lyrics of her 200-plus songs have evolved as she's matured from teenage girl to 30-something woman. In recent years, she's also learned to shift the focus from autobiographical to fictional characters. But one thing has remained the same: Taylor's ability to express herself candidly. "I listen to music because it says how I feel better than I could and it

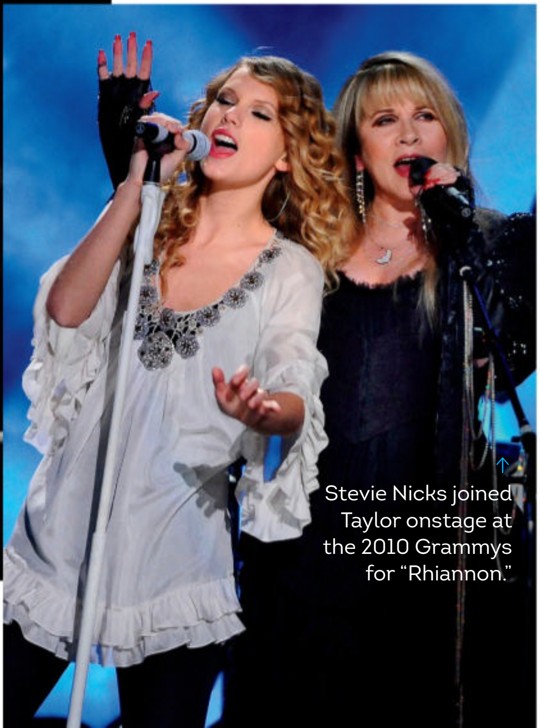


Taylor has called Shania Twain one of her greatest country influences.

says what I wish I had said when the moment's there," she explained to Songwriter Universe. "Be as direct as you possibly can. If you need to dial it back later, I guess do that. If you can in your songwriting, be as detailed as possible, because for people to relate to it they may not have the same details in their relationship that you had in yours but they can relate in that they had these little details to their relationship too. The more honesty, the better; the more details, the better; the more direct, the better."

For Taylor, writing a song is second to breathing air—she needs to do it to exist. "I'm either incredibly stressed or overjoyed, and the way that usually goes is that if I've just written a song, I'm the happiest you will ever see me," she explained to *Entertainment Weekly* during the *Speak Now* era. "But if I haven't written a song in a week and a half, I am more stressed than you will ever, ever see me at any other point. If I haven't written a song in more than about nine days, that's when I start to zone out in the middle of conversations because I'm thinking about what I could be writing about next. For me, it's just such a fun challenge to constantly be writing and constantly be trying to top what you just wrote. It's one of

In 2022, Taylor and Ed Sheeran collaborated on his track "The Joker and the Queen."



Stevie Nicks joined Taylor onstage at the 2010 Grammys for "Rhiannon."

↑
Taylor brought Natalie Maines of The Chicks onstage in 2015—and four years later, the country trio provided backup vocals on "Soon You'll Get Better."

my favorite games to play—trying to beat what I've written last."

And her fans are invited to play along through the Easter eggs hinting at what's coming next. Everywhere from music videos and photo shoots to social media posts, Taylor is constantly dropping clues for detective Swifties to solve. And it began with her first album, when she included hidden messages in the liner notes in an effort to incentivize fans to read what she was singing, because as she revealed on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in 2021: "My lyrics are what I'm most proud of out of everything that I do, out of every aspect of my job."

HER FIRST SONG

When Taylor was 12, a computer repairman named Ronnie Cremer taught her three guitar chords (C, D and G)—and that very night, she penned her first song, "Lucky You," in just 10 minutes. Lyrically, it's a peek at the kind of songwriter she'd become, with whimsical imagery in the chorus: "Mama named her Lucky on a starlit night / A rabbit foot in her pocket, she dances in

BAD BLOOD

DISS TRACKS—NOT BAND-AIDS—FIXED THE BULLET HOLES FROM THESE RIVALS.

It's widely known that Taylor Swift's now-settled feud with Katy Perry inspired "Bad Blood," but the "Roar" singer is hardly the only famous person to get their own diss track. Check out the other three people with whom Taylor had seemingly intractable beefs:

↑
After Kanye's outburst, then-president Barack Obama called him a "jackass."

Kanye West
Taylor and the rapper have had an up-and-down relationship, which has inspired not one but two tracks (and possibly more). After he interrupted her speech at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards to proclaim "Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all time," Taylor responded in song with "Innocent" on *Speak Now*. Instead of reprimanding Kanye for his actions, she sang: "Who you are is not what you did / You're still an innocent." "I think a lot of people expected me to write a song about him. But, for me, it was important to write a song *to* him," Taylor explained to *New York* magazine.

Seven years later, when Kanye referred to her as a "bitch" in his 2016 song "Famous"—and leaked audio from their conversation claiming Taylor gave him her blessing—the gloves came off for *Reputation*'s "Look What You Made Me Do." Although she never mentions Kanye by name, there are plenty of allusions, like the "tilted stage" that became a symbol of his *Saint Pablo Tour*.

Scooter Braun
Although most songs on *folklore* were centered around fictional people, one in particular was all Taylor and the music exec who bought the rights to her first six albums. On "Mad Woman," she sings about being betrayed by someone who "took everything from me" and then painted her as an angry person.

Camilla Belle
When Joe Jonas dumped Taylor in a 27-second phone call, she publicly blasted him in "Forever & Always"—and next on *Speak Now*, the singer took aim at the other girl: Belle, who starred in the Jonas Brothers' video for "Lovebug." Taylor's side of the story is a scathing portrayal of the actress who's "better known for the things that she does on the mattress."

↑ Taylor was named songwriter-artist of the decade at the Nashville Songwriter Awards in September 2022.

spite / Of the fact that she's different / And yet she's the same."" (Thirteen years later in 2015, things between Taylor and Cremer hit a sour note when her legal team sent him a letter to stop using her name on his site itaughttaylorswift.com.)

BIGGEST INFLUENCES

Taylor's ever-evolving sound is a testament to her diverse musical tastes. Growing up, artists like The Chicks, Shania Twain and Keith Urban inspired her start in country, as did classic singer-songwriters such as Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Carly Simon, Stevie Nicks and Paul McCartney. As she crossed over to pop, so did her influences, with Pete Wentz and Lana Del Rey being her two favorite modern lyricists. In fact, the Fall Out Boy bassist single-handedly inspired "Blank Space," which Taylor describes as "a song that's just zingers," which she learned from listening to the emo band. "They take a phrase and they twist it," she explained to *Rolling Stone*, adding that one of her favorites is from their debut single, "Sugar, We're Goin' Down": "'Loaded God complex / Cock it and pull it.' When I heard that, I was like, 'I'm dreaming.'"

REPEATED IMAGERY

Sure, Taylor writes a lot about love, but they're not your average boy-meets-girl scenarios. Many of her early songs romanticize relationships with imagery of princes, damsels in distress, white horses and feeling "wonderstruck" on the appropriately titled "Love Story," "Today Was a Fairytale" and "Enchanted." Another recurring setting was rainy weather, whether kissing in it in her best dress ("Fearless," as well as "Hey Stephen" and "Sparks Fly"), trying to escape it ("The Other Side of the Door," "Come in With the Rain") or letting it wash over you ("Clean").

The only thing Taylor loves more than rain is autumn, and the season is the backdrop to several songs, including "All Too Well." Likewise, she wrote an entire song about a

Numbers Game

SHE HAS A WAY WITH WORDS—AND SHE MAKES THEM COUNT.

Every Swiftie knows Taylor Swift's lucky number is 13 and it rules her music, whether it's a 13-second intro or a release date ("Out of the Woods," which has 13 letters, came out on Oct. 13, 2014). "I was born on the 13th. I turned 13 on Friday the 13th. My first album went gold in 13 weeks. My first No. 1 song had a 13-second intro," she explained to MTV News in 2009. By that point, the number had also brought success at award shows—every time she won, she was seated in the 13th row or section M, the 13th letter of the alphabet. "Whenever a 13 comes up in my life, it's a good thing." But it's not the only number. Among her song titles: "Fifteen," "22," "The Lucky One," "The 1" and "seven."

Across her 10 albums, one spot on the track list holds special emotional significance—No. 5. Historically, that's the one where she's most vulnerable when expressing her deepest pain—and it doesn't always need to be in the love department. After songs about heartbreak with John Mayer ("Dear John" on *Speak Now*) and Jake Gyllenhaal ("All Too Well" on *Red*) and anxiety for it to work with Joe Alwyn ("Delicate" on *Reputation*), Track No. 5 on *folklore* tackled the pain of having her catalog sold by Scott Borchetta. As Taylor eulogizes the death of their relationship, she conjures images of her funeral before taking a parting shot: "When you can't sleep at night, you hear my stolen lullabies."

← Taylor accessorized with a "13" on her hand for a night out.

"Cardigan," plus tons more set in winter: "Back to December," "Call It What You Want" and "New Year's Day." For the warmer months, there's "Cruel Summer," "august" and "seven."

Aside from *Red* and its title track, she's also used colors to shade her emotions: "white-veil occasion," "gold rush," "blue sky," "little black dress," "shades of gray" and "cherry lips."

GHOST WRITER

When Rihanna's collaboration with Calvin Harris, "This Is What You Came For," dropped in 2016, it was an instant hit for unknown songwriter Nils Sjöberg—and that's because Nils was really Taylor Swift. The superstar revealed to Paul McCartney in a *Rolling Stone* conversation that she came up with the pseudonym by combining two of the most popular male names in Sweden (a country synonymous with pop music). Why use a fake name? "When you still have a love for making the work and you don't want the work to become overshadowed by this thing that's been built around you, based on what people know about you."

SHARING THE WEALTH

Taylor's so prolific, she's written too many songs even for her to record. Throughout her career, she's given away surefire hits to other artists, including "You'll Find Your Way Back Home" (performed by Miley Cyrus for *Hannah Montana: The Movie*); "Best Days of Your Life" to Kellie Pickler; "Better Man" to Little Big Town, and "Babe" to Sugarland—the latter two which she recorded and released as vault tracks on *Red (Taylor's Version)*.

DEEP CUTS

Taylor's written a lot about the opposite sex—but what if she was one of them? That was the idea behind "The Man," in which she calls out sexist double standards and imagines how the media would treat her if she was someone like Leonardo DiCaprio, who's dated just as much as she has, yet is praised for his conquests. Bullying is another issue Taylor has personally been affected by, and she hit back at not only her tormentors ("Mean") but those who go after people simply living their truth, like on the pro-LGBTQ "You Need to Calm Down" ("Why are you mad / When you could be GLAAD").

Several songs honor Taylor's mother and the bond they share, but one is the hardest she's ever written. On "Soon You'll Get Better," she reveals Andrea Swift's battle with cancer. "It was a family decision to even put on the album," Taylor told fans during a 2019 YouTube Live. "I can't sing it. It's hard to emotionally deal with that song"—and when she previewed it during *Lover*'s Secret Sessions, she had to leave the room.

↑ Jack Antonoff has worked on *1989*, *Reputation*, *Lover*, *folklore*, *evermore* and *Midnights*.

> **THERE WAS A POINT THAT I GOT TO AS A WRITER WHO ONLY WROTE VERY DIARISTIC SONGS THAT I FELT IT WAS UNSUSTAINABLE FOR MY FUTURE MOVING FORWARD."**
>
> Taylor Swift, on the invented stories of *folklore*

Top 40

MUSIC VIDEOS

From her first (Tim McGraw) to one of her most recent (Anti-Hero) and the dozens in between—we count down all of Tay's best videos.

A LOT
GOING ON
AT THE
MOMENT

40

↑ I BET YOU THINK ABOUT ME (2021)

VIEWS 48.5 million

Written by Taylor and directed by her friend Blake Lively, the duo came up with a dynamic visual: A groom (Miles Teller) keeps hallucinating that his ex is everywhere at his wedding. For the *Red (Taylor's Version)* vault track, there are also plenty of Easter eggs. Taylor gifts the blushing bride (Teller's real-life wife Keleigh Sperry) a red scarf like the one from "All Too Well" and the five-tier wedding cake she sticks her hand into for a taste is decorated with visuals from all of her albums, including the seagulls from *1989*.

39

↑ TIM McGRAW (2006)

VIEWS 48.6 million

Taylor's very first music video relives a lost relationship through flashbacks. As she explained it, the concept "deals with the haunting power of music and how hearing a song years after it was first popular can have such an emotional appeal." "Tim McGraw"—which won Breakthrough Video of the Year at the 2007 CMT Music Awards—was filmed at the home of another Nashville, Tennessee, country music legend: Johnny Cash.

38

↑ THE MAN (2020)

VIEWS 73.5 million

Taylor gets bonus points for directing this video that takes aim at gender stereotypes. Disguised as "The Man," she's a sleazy businessman who yells at people and throws a tantrum when he doesn't get his way during a tennis match. Released around the time Taylor lost the rights to her masters, one scene takes a dig at "The Man" who sold them: On a subway wall, graffiti spells out the titles of the six albums—with a "Missing" poster reading "If found return to Taylor Swift."

37

↓ ALL TOO WELL (2021)

VIEWS 82 million

Technically a short film, "All Too Well" stars Sadie Sink and Dylan O'Brien as Her and Him, a couple whose troubles can't overcome their sizable age gap. Based on Taylor's romance with Jake Gyllenhaal, there are plenty of nods to the real-life inspiration, such as the iconic red scarf and her 21st birthday party. Taylor, who wrote and directed, also makes an appearance as the older version of Her, a bestselling novel author.

36

↑ ANTI-HERO (2022)

VIEWS 89.5 million

Two Taylors are better than one! In the first video for *Midnights*—which she directed—we meet the superstar's own worst enemy: herself. The pair take too many shots and obsess over weight gain, a visual depiction of Taylor's "nightmare scenarios and intrusive thoughts." Based on the song's lyric, "I have this dream my daughter-in-law kills me for the money," she also attends her own funeral, which ends in a brawl over her will.

35

↑ OURS (2011)

VIEWS 106.4 million

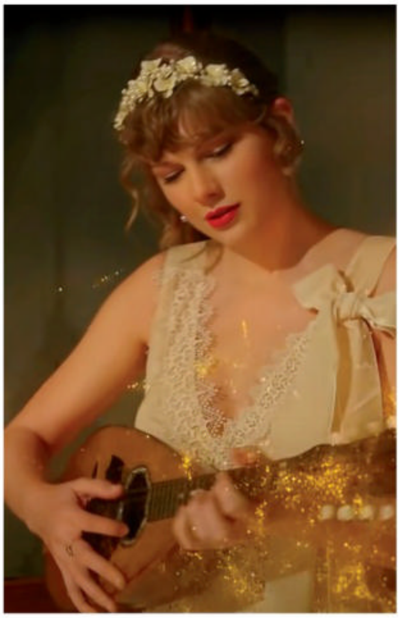
We see a different side of Taylor: the office employee with whom no one wants to be friends—but it's OK, because at home she has true love.

34

↓ WILLOW (2020)

VIEWS 114.9 million

Picking up where "Cardigan" (see next entry) left off, Taylor (who also directed) escapes to a magical land via her piano, following a golden thread that takes her through an enchanted forest and a carnival, where she performs inside a glass box, before finally leading her back to her lost love (played by backup dancer Taeok Lee). And the two live happily ever after in their cabin in the woods.



33

↑ CARDIGAN (2020)

VIEWS 115.2 million

The world had no idea what Taylor had been up to until she dropped *folklore* and the video for its first single all in the same day at the height of the coronavirus global lockdown. A haunting visual that perfectly wraps up the song like an old cardigan, it begins with Taylor, dressed in a nightgown, playing a piano in a cottage that transports her to a lush moss-covered forest (and then a dark stormy sea).

Written and directed by Taylor, she had a clear idea of what she wanted "Cardigan" to look like, and called on Academy Award-nominated cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto to help make it happen. But the song itself was a secret to everyone on set—Taylor wore an earpiece to ensure no one could leak it before its release.

32

↑ PICTURE TO BURN (2008)

VIEWS 115.3 million

After she sees her ex with his new girlfriend (who's driving his truck, no less), the brokenhearted singer gets some fiery revenge.

31

↑ THE STORY OF US (2011)

VIEWS 140.8 million

The imagery is literal: Taylor narrates a book titled *The Story of Us* while being distracted by her ex in the school library. It's the one place they shouldn't speak (per the rules, of course), and they almost do, but change their minds. The end.

30

↑ WHITE HORSE (2009)

VIEWS 156.3 million

An ex returns for a second chance—and he almost gets it, until Taylor recalls all the reasons he became an ex in the first place.

29

→ TEARDROPS ON MY GUITAR (2007)

VIEWS 162.6 million

A different kind of unrequited love—her best guy friend at school—has the teenage singer so sad, she lays in bed curled up with an acoustic guitar daydreaming about their confusing relationship.

28

↓ FIFTEEN (2009)

VIEWS 164 million

The abundance of green screen and special effects take away from the simple beauty of the story: reliving high school at the tender age of 15.

27

↑ OUT OF THE WOODS (2015)

VIEWS 186 million

After losing a love, Taylor discovers what's lurking in the woods is far worse. She escapes, but only temporarily, as she must also contend with snow, water and fire. But in the end, the heartbroken superstar finds something even better: herself.

26

↑ SAFE & SOUND (2012)

VIEWS 197.4 million

A prelude to the *folklore* era, Taylor wanders a forest clad in a nightgown as she duets with the Civil Wars, who croon in a firelit cottage for this *Hunger Games* soundtrack ballad.

25

← BEGIN AGAIN (2012)

VIEWS 198.6 million

Taylor in Paris! Ready to open her heart again after it was broken, she takes to the City of Love, where she finds romance. Perhaps more interesting than the new love or Eiffel Tower backdrop is the fashion: lots of chiffon, silk, bow-accented blouses, even cigarette pants that can be read as a homage to Audrey Hepburn's in *Funny Face*.

24

↑ OUR SONG (2007)

VIEWS 199 million

Mostly set on Taylor's front porch, where the singer is decked out in a periwinkle gown, the video is juxtaposed with other color-coordinated visuals: a field of red flowers and a black-and-white performance space. "Our Song" was directed by Trey Fanjoy, who helmed Taylor's first three videos, and her vision left the singer speechless. "It all came together in her head," marveled Taylor. "She was able to translate that so well onto film. It just shows what a truly great director she is."

> **"BACK WHEN TAYLOR SWIFT WAS A PROMISING COUNTRY UP-AND-COMER, SHE UNVEILED ONE OF HER SIMPLEST, SWEETEST MUSIC VIDEOS WITH THE 'OUR SONG' VISUAL."**
>
> *Billboard's* Jason Lipshutz

23

← LOVER (2019)

VIEWS 210 million

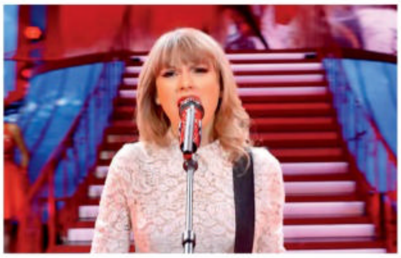
Taylor and her lover (*1989* backup dancer Christian Owens) live inside a snow globe, where they make the rules in the monochromatic rooms: green parlor, yellow living room, pink bedroom and blue bathroom.

22

↑ MEAN (2011)

VIEWS 216.2 million

Just as the title suggests, bullies of all kinds are exposed as Taylor and her band perform in the most down-home country setting ever seen in any of her videos.



21

↑ RED (2013)

VIEWS 227.4 million

The title track gets the concert footage treatment, and it feels like a front-row seat to her sold-out The Red Tour.

20

↑ END GAME (2018)

VIEWS 267 million

Resembling a big-budget action flick more than a music video, Taylor parties all over the world: on a yacht in Miami with rapper Future, in a Tokyo dive bar with Ed Sheeran and at a New Year's Eve house party in London.

19

↓ BACK TO DECEMBER (2011)

VIEWS 289 million

This time, Taylor's the heartbreaker—and she's not suited for the role. She's just as hurt, and snow falls down around her inside her home as she mourns the decision.

18

↓ YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN (2019)

VIEWS 295.3 million

Much like "Bad Blood" before it (see page 59), "You Need to Calm Down" features an all-star ensemble cast, most of whom are LGBTQ+, including Laverne Cox, Ellen DeGeneres, RuPaul, Billy Porter, Adam Lambert and *Queer Eye*'s Fab Five. They are the colorful residents of a trailer park that Taylor also calls home—until she burns hers down. Unbothered by the antigay protestors picketing outside the property, they hold a Pop Queen Pageant, in which drag queens compete as "Taylor," "Adele," "Ariana Grande," "Beyoncé" and "Lady Gaga." But it's another pop diva who makes the most amusing cameo: The video ends with Katy Perry and Taylor, dressed as a hamburger and fries respectively, hugging it out and ending their much-publicized feud.

17

↑ MINE (2010)

VIEWS 314.2 million

Taylor codirected this video that reflects on how her parents' relationship has affected her own. But she doesn't make the same mistakes—she gets a happily ever after as a wife and mother.

16

↑ ...READY FOR IT? (2017)

VIEWS 320.8 million

It's Taylor like we've never seen her before! In this sci-fi clip, the singer, in a hooded cloak, makes her way through a seedy, graffitied underworld, where she comes face-to-face with her robotic counterpart—or is it the other way around? Let the games begin, indeed.

15

↑ EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED (2013)

VIEWS 390 million

Two kids who look a lot like Taylor and collaborator Ed Sheeran meet on the school bus and become best friends. It's assumed they're the younger versions of the famous singers until the end, when they cameo as the parents.

14

↑ ME! (2019)

VIEWS 397.6 million

Taylor introduced Swifties to the *Lover* era with a fantastical pastel-colored visual best described by *Variety* as "bubblegum psychedelia": There are unicorns, rainbows, skywriting, a kitten, and as a nod to "Welcome to New York," a kaleidoscope heart belonging to Panic! at the Disco's Brendon Urie. The lead track off *Lover*, the conclusion of the *Reputation* era, is made clear from the opening sequence when a slithering snake explodes into a flock of butterflies. It was quite an epic production, and fans agreed you can't spell "awesome" without "ME!"—the video broke Vevo's 24-hour record with 65.2 million views.

13

↓ DELICATE (2018)

VIEWS 492 million

For someone who lives every moment in the public eye, being invisible for a night is a dream come true. Taylor immediately ditches her shoes and security detail and embarks on an interpretive danceathon through Los Angeles landmarks, including the Millennium Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles Theatre and 7th Street/Metro Center station, before seeking out a mysterious man at the Golden Gopher bar—when she realizes people notice her once again.

12

↑ I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE (2012)

VIEWS 503.4 million

Pink-haired Taylor wakes up on the cold hard ground after being abandoned at a rave by her troublemaking boyfriend (Reeve Carney). "I wanted to tell the story of a girl who falls into a world that's too fast for her, and suffers the consequences," said Taylor, who won Best Female Video at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards for it.

11

← 22 (2013)

VIEWS 627 million

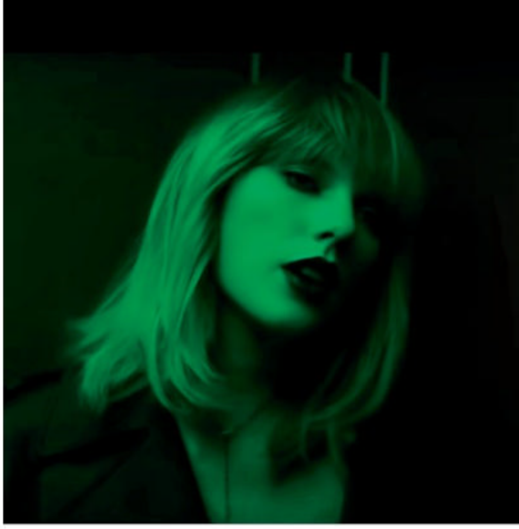
Before there was The Squad, some of Taylor's longtime friends starred in this ode to being young—and happy, free and confused, in the best way. By most standards, the party is pretty tame for 22-year-olds, although the superstar does jump in the pool with her clothes on.

10

↓ LOVE STORY (2008)

VIEWS 660.7 million

A modern-day Romeo and Juliet, this "Love Story" is timeless. Incorporating elements of the Renaissance, Middle Ages and Regency eras, Taylor specifically wanted to depict a tale that "could happen in the 1700s, 1800s or 2008." Her prince in the video is Justin Gaston, whom Taylor discovered while watching the sixth season of the reality competition *Nashville Star*. When Justin was eliminated, coming in 10th place, his consolation prize was even greater bragging rights: starring opposite Taylor in this video.



9

↑ I DON'T WANNA LIVE FOREVER (2017)

VIEWS 688 million

For the *Fifty Shades Darker* track, the video is, well, dark—Taylor and One Direction's Zayn Malik roam a dimly lit hotel, both lovelorn and in search of one another. If only someone would turn on a light.

8

↑ WE ARE NEVER EVER GETTING BACK TOGETHER (2012)

VIEWS 715 million

Breakups never felt so fun—and whimsical. It was always Taylor's vision to make the music video as "quirky as the song sounds," she told CBS News. "There's just knitting everywhere; there's just random woodland creatures popping up." To add to the charm, director Declan Whitebloom, who also worked on "Mean" and "Ours," filmed the video as a pop-up book in one continuous shot (with no editing). As the story plays out, Taylor wanders from scene to scene, retelling the ups and downs of her relationship.

7

↑ STYLE (2015)

VIEWS 740 million

True to its title, "Style" has lots of it—but we're not talking fashion. Director Kyle Newman, the then-husband of Taylor's friend Jaime King, used a technique where abstract imagery—such as dying trees, smoke and a thunderstorm—is overlaid onto a silhouette of the singer. In another sequence featuring her white shirt–clad lover (played by Dominic Sherwood), a feed of Taylor's classic red lips is projected onto a bedroom curtain, seemingly to haunt him. Mirrors are also used to reflect emotions, as the two hold up shards that reveal the things they liked about each other.

Taylor handpicked her costar after they met through mutual friends—because he pretty much had that James Dean-daydream look in his eye. "Taylor said I kind of fit the person they'd like in the video," the *Shadowhunters* actor told HuffPost. "I think I had a lot of the attributes that she wanted and that she described in her lyrics."

6

↑ WILDEST DREAMS (2015)

VIEWS 850.4 million

The dramatic song received a fitting visual interpretation: Set in the 1950s, an actress (Taylor in a brunette wig) falls in love with her leading man (Scott Eastwood) while making a movie in the Serengeti. Filmed on location, the cinematic video is based on several Hollywood love stories, from Elizabeth Taylor's tumultuous romance with Richard Burton to *Out of Africa* (1985) and *The English Patient* (1996). After wrapping production, Taylor made the wildest dream come true for animal conservation—she donated all of the proceeds from the video to African Parks Foundation of America.

5

↑ LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO (2017)

VIEWS 1.38 billion

According to Taylor, "If everything you write about me was true, this is how ridiculous it would look." Indeed, "Look What You Made Me Do" is a satirical take on the public perception of the pop star. It opens in a graveyard, with a headstone proclaiming "Here lies Taylor Swift's reputation"—and out from it crawls zombie Taylor in the blue dress from "Style." Over the next four minutes, she's depicted as living in a gilded cage, bathing in diamonds, sitting on a throne and leading a squad of picture-perfect models. One of its standout sequences is during the bridge when all of Taylor's previous eras are represented, climbing over each other to get to the top.

4

↓ YOU BELONG WITH ME (2009)

VIEWS 1.39 billion

A tale of two Taylors: The superstar plays both protagonist (nerdy girl next door, literally) and antagonist (a "horrible and scary and intimidating and perfect" cheerleader, wearing a brown wig to differentiate) in the fight for the affections of *Hannah Montana* actor Lucas Till. "One of my favorite things about this video is that there wasn't a standard performance scene," explained Taylor, who won Best Female Video at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards. "This video was pretty much all story line and I'm narrating it in the moment, basically narrating while all this is happening around me."

I love you
Jewels

3

↓ BAD BLOOD (2015)

VIEWS 1.53 billion

A roll call of Taylor's Squad, the epic ensemble comes together to help secret agent Catastrophe get revenge against her former partner Arsyn (Selena Gomez). Joining her on the "futuristic neo-noir" journey of butt-kicking are: Slay-Z (Gigi Hadid), Knockout (Karlie Kloss) Cut Throat (Zendaya), Destructa X (Ellie Goulding) and the Crimson Curse (Hayley Williams). Mariska Hargitay (Justice), was amazed at how inclusive Taylor and her friends were, despite the *Law & Order: SVU* actress being decades older. "It was so sweet and I had so much fun," she said on *Watch What Happens Live*. "They are so tight, these girls, and Taylor's ridiculously talented, and it's hard for me to even download her... 'cause I don't understand the talent and poise at that age."

ED BY TAYLOR

2

→ BLANK SPACE (2014)

VIEWS 3.08 billion

Taylor knew we'd heard about her—and she set out to harness the narrative with a self-deprecating depiction of her reputation as a crazy girlfriend. With visuals inspired by Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, "Blank Space" is truly cinematic. The singer shows her love interest (model Sean O'Pry) all the "incredible things" of her rich life: massive mansion, gourmet dinners, designer wardrobe. But then, it all goes down in flames, as screaming matches escalate into psycho ex Taylor torching his clothes and smashing his vintage sports car with a golf club.

For fans who wanted a better look around the "Blank Space" set, the interactive app *American Express Unstaged: Taylor Swift Experience* offered a 360-degree tour of the mansion's rooms, where Easter eggs could be found hidden amid the chandeliers and gold-leaf ceilings.

Taylor's Oscar-worthy performance nabbed two MTV Video Music Awards, and *Rolling Stone* ranked it No. 67 on its list of greatest music videos of all time. "When you have an artist wanting to test her imaging," director Joseph Kahn told Mashable, "it's always great territory to be in."

1

↑ SHAKE IT OFF (2014)

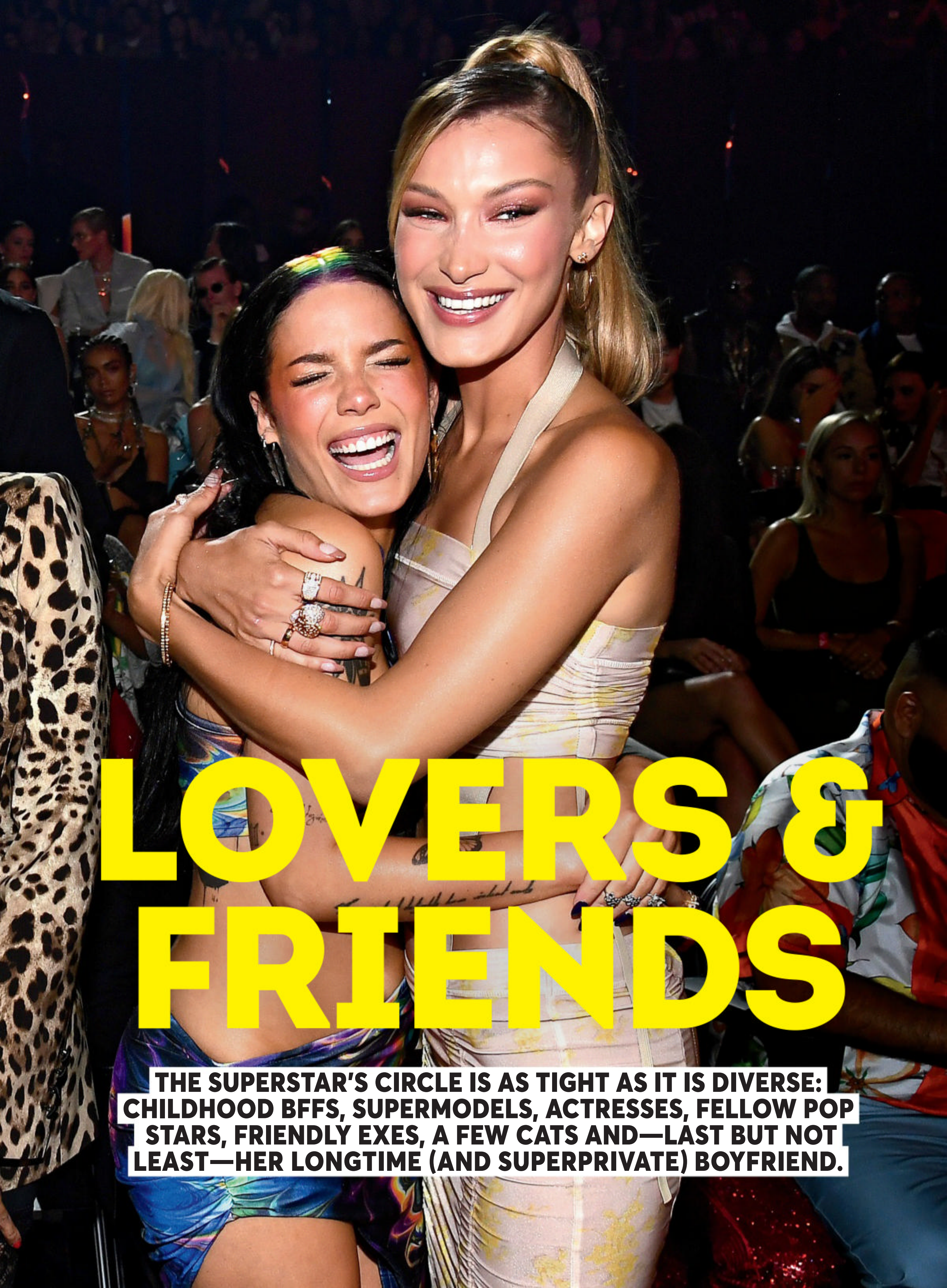
VIEWS 3.24 billion

Taylor Swift's most-watched music video by millions, it's the pop star at her finest. As she tries to prove she's lightning on her feet up against professional ballerinas, break-dancers, cheerleaders and performance artists, she's dancing like no one's watching—except billions have since the video dropped on Aug. 18, 2014, the same day as the lead single off *1989*.

"I'm putting myself in all these awkward situations where the dancers are incredible, and I'm having fun with it, but not fitting in," Taylor explained to *Rolling Stone*. "I'm being embarrassingly bad at it. It shows you to keep doing you, keep being you, keep trying to figure out where you fit in the world, and eventually you will."

There are also plenty of nods to pop culture: *Black Swan*, Toni Basil's 1981 music video for "Mickey," as well as Audrey Hepburn's dance sequence in *Funny Face*, which Taylor emulates alongside 100 fans handpicked from social media. The first cut off *1989*, the three-day "Shake It Off" shoot was so top secret, it was referred to as Project Sparrow during production—and everyone involved had to sign ironclad NDAs.

→
Taylor hit the 2019 MTV Video Music Awards with (from left): Gigi Hadid, Sandra "Pepa" Denton, Halsey and Bella Hadid.



LOVERS & FRIENDS

THE SUPERSTAR'S CIRCLE IS AS TIGHT AS IT IS DIVERSE: CHILDHOOD BFFS, SUPERMODELS, ACTRESSES, FELLOW POP STARS, FRIENDLY EXES, A FEW CATS AND—LAST BUT NOT LEAST—HER LONGTIME (AND SUPERPRIVATE) BOYFRIEND.

→
What does Joe Alwyn think about Taylor writing songs about him? "It's flattering," he told *The Sunday Times*.

KING OF HER ♥

Unlike past relationships, she has kept her romance with her "London Boy," British actor Joe Alwyn, ultra-private.

For nearly a decade, every one of Taylor Swift's relationships was carried out under the ruthless scrutiny of the public, documented by paparazzi and dissected by tabloids. But all that changed when she fell in love with Joe Alwyn. With the British actor, Taylor has found peace—and she doesn't want her famous life to disrupt his. She has only dropped minor hints at their dynamic through lyrics: from the moment their eyes first locked ("Dress") and falling in love ("Delicate") to meeting his friends ("London Boy") and, eventually, moving in together ("Lover").

Taylor and Alwyn, 32, were first linked in May 2017, a year after it's believed they were introduced at the 2016 Met Gala. According to *The Sun*, by the time their romance was revealed, they had been secretly dating for months. Two years later, Taylor confirmed the speculation in a diary entry published in the deluxe edition of *Lover*. "We have been together and no one has found out for 3 months now," she wrote in January 2017. "I'm essentially based in London, hiding out trying to protect us from the nasty world that just wants to ruin things."

After spending time with Alwyn's family and friends in the U.K., in June 2017, he came home to Nashville, Tennessee, with Taylor to meet her parents. At the time, a source told *People* magazine that Taylor "seems relaxed and very happy" with the actor, who was in *The Favourite*. "She's enjoying being more low-key and Joe makes her laugh." And when she released *Reputation* later that year, he was by her side for her first major promotional performance, headlining iHeartRadio's Jingle Ball in New York. Same for opening night of her world tour in Glendale, Arizona—Alwyn, trying to go incognito in a baseball cap, was in the audience recording the show on his iPhone.

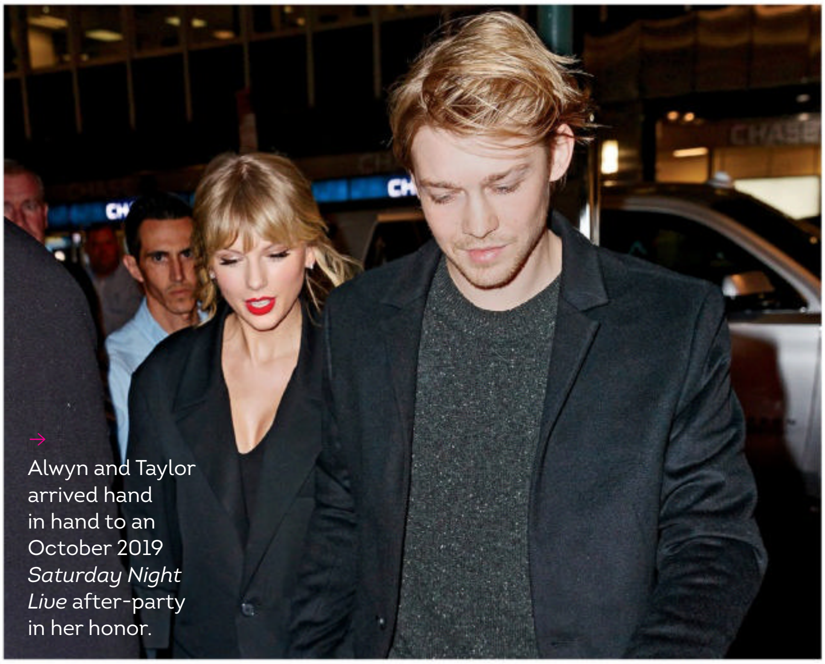
→ In June 2017, the couple were spied on the balcony of Taylor's Nashville condo.

> **I'VE LEARNED THAT IF I [TALK ABOUT JOE], PEOPLE THINK IT'S UP FOR DISCUSSION, AND OUR RELATIONSHIP ISN'T UP FOR DISCUSSION ...THAT'S WHERE THE BOUNDARY IS."**
>
> **Taylor Swift, to *The Guardian* in 2019**

And for his big moments, Taylor has been just as supportive. She was on his arm (but not the red carpet) at his film premieres, the 2019 Golden Globes (*The Favourite* earned five nominations) and the BAFTA Film Awards. And in 2021, while Alwyn was filming Hulu's *Conversations With Friends* in Ireland, the superstar paid him a visit—and had locals buzzing when she popped into several Belfast establishments. But it's not all work and no play for the couple. Over the past five and a half years, they've been spotted on vacations all over the globe, from walking on the beach in Turks and Caicos, to strolling the streets of Paris hand-in-hand and ringing in the new year in the Maldives.

During the pandemic, as Taylor and Alwyn hunkered down together in London, they discovered a new layer of their partnership: The couple collaborated on two *folklore* tracks, "Exile" and "Betty"—with Alwyn taking the pseudonym William Bowery. Savvy fans quickly solved the mystery: William was the name of Alwyn's great-grandfather, a composer; one of the couple's first public outings was at NYC's Bowery Hotel. "Joe plays piano beautifully and he's always just playing and making things up and kind of creating things," Taylor revealed in *Folklore: Long Pond Sessions*. While working on "Exile," her talented beau wrote the piano part and sang a few lines that convinced her the song should be a duet, later recorded by Bon Iver.

Alwyn actually came up with "Betty," about a teenage love triangle told from the boy's point of view, on his own. Taylor had overheard her boyfriend singing the "entire, fully formed" chorus from another room, and it was music to her ears. "I thought it sounded really good



→ Alwyn and Taylor arrived hand in hand to an October 2019 *Saturday Night Live* after-party in her honor.

from a masculine perspective," she continued. "And I really liked that it seemed to be an apology." It was also the first time Taylor had collaborated with a boyfriend on her own music. "It was a step that we would never have taken because why would we have ever written a song together? This was the first time we had a conversation where I came in and I was like, 'Hey, this could be really weird and we could hate this, so could we just, because we're in quarantine and there's nothing else going on, could we just try to see what it's like if we write this song together?' "

Although Taylor gave Alwyn full credit, he downplayed his role. "It was really the most accidental thing to happen in lockdown," he told *GQ*. "It wasn't like, 'It's three o'clock, it's time to write a song!' It was just messing around on a piano and singing badly and being overheard and then thinking, you know, what if we tried to get to the end of it together?" Alwyn, who also cowrote three songs off *folklore*'s follow-up, *evermore*, and one on *Midnights*, revealed a little more to Vulture in May 2022. "I'd probably had a drink and was just stumbling around the house. We couldn't decide on a film to watch that night, and she was like, 'Do you want to try and finish writing that song you were singing earlier?' And so we got a guitar and did that."

"Betty," named after Blake Lively's third daughter (her elder children, James and Ines, are the other two characters in the song) is not only a fan favorite; it also earned Alwyn a Grammy, along with Taylor, for 2021 Album of the Year (*folklore*). In her acceptance speech, Taylor praised Alwyn as "the first person that I play every single song I write and I had the best time writing songs with you in quarantine." As for why they kept their collaboration a secret, he explained to *GQ* it was so that "people would just listen to the music rather than focus on the fact that we wrote it together."

The peek into Taylor and Alwyn's private relationship is the closest fans have gotten to knowing what goes on behind closed doors. For the superstar, the relationship is an important part of the "normal life" she has long desired, away from the spotlight. "I was falling in love with someone who had a wonderfully normal, balanced life," she recalled in the 2020 documentary *Miss Americana*. "We decided together we wanted our relationship to be private. I was happy. But I wasn't happy in the way I was trained to be happy. It was happiness without anyone else's input. We were just happy."

Luckily for Taylor, she's found someone who craves privacy as much as she does. Any time Alwyn is asked about his famous girlfriend, he's reminded "loose lips sink ships," as she sings on "I Know Places," about fighting to protect her public romance with Harry Styles. But in a recent interview, he accidentally stirred up Swifties with what he *did* say—a loaded answer that left many questions. "If I had a pound for every time I think I've been told I've been engaged, then I'd have a lot of pound coins," Alwyn mused in an April 2022 interview with *The Wall Street Journal*. "I mean, the truth is, if the answer was yes, I wouldn't say, and if the answer was no, I wouldn't say."

> **BEING IN THE RELATIONSHIP I'M IN NOW, I'VE DEFINITELY MADE DECISIONS THAT HAVE MADE MY LIFE FEEL MORE LIKE A REAL LIFE AND LESS LIKE JUST A STORYLINE TO BE COMMENTED ON IN TABLOIDS."**
>
> Taylor, to *Rolling Stone* in 2020

→
“Joe and I really love sad songs,” Taylor revealed in a 2020 Apple Music interview. “We’ve always bonded over music.”

HEARTBREAK PRINCES

Easy they come, easy they go—the star's boyfriends and unrequited loves and the songs they inspired her to write.

STEPHEN BARKER LILES

"Hey Stephen"

While on tour in 2008, Taylor Swift was crushing hard on her opening act, Love and Theft singer Stephen Barker Liles. The two immediately hit it off, yet she was friend-zoned by the 24-year-old, much to her dismay. "[We] became really close when we were on tour together," Liles told *Taste of Country*. "We had a real emotional relationship. We talked on the phone a lot. She was really cool."

Then one day she called him up to say she had written a song about him on her upcoming *Fearless* album. But it wasn't a bad thing, and he was touched once he heard "Hey Stephen." "It's actually one of the nicest things anybody's ever done for me," he told *The Boot*. Coincidentally, he had also penned a song for Taylor, "Try to Make It Anyway," which he released in 2011. As obviously as "Hey Stephen" was about Liles, his lyrics left no doubt who inspired them: "The curly hair and the cowboy boots …How could anyone get over you?"

←

Stephen Barker Liles has called himself a "fool" for not making a move on Taylor when he had the chance, but is glad they were able to stay friends.

JOE JONAS

"Forever & Always"

The first ex-boyfriend who learned hell hath no fury like a Taylor Swift scorned, Joe Jonas felt the repercussions of breaking up with his girlfriend of three months in a 27-second phone call, right as she was finishing *Fearless*. She had plenty of time to whip up one last song about her heartbreak: "Forever & Always." Sarcastic, it was. "I'd never had that happen to me before that way, with that abruptness," she revealed to *People*. "I thought to myself, 'This needs to be said.' It's a song about watching somebody completely fade away in a relationship and wondering what you did wrong and wondering why things have changed."

If it weren't already clear the song was about Jonas, on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* in 2008, Taylor detailed how he dumped her to the world. The Jonas Brother singer seemed to take the high road, telling *Seventeen* "Forever & Always" was "flattering"—but then he released his response song, "Much Better," comparing his new girlfriend, actress Camilla Belle, to his famous ex. On the track, he sings: "I get a rep for breakin' hearts / Now I'm done with superstars / And all the tears on her guitar / I'm not bitter."

Eventually, that was true. Jonas went on to date Taylor's friend Gigi Hadid and they even hung out as a foursome with her then-boyfriend Calvin Harris (see page 71). In 2019,

←

"That emotion of rejection, for me, usually starts out sad and then gets mad," Taylor said of the song Joe Jonas inspired, "Forever & Always."

Taylor returned to *Ellen* and admitted the "most rebellious thing she did as a teenager" was publicly blasting Jonas, who married *Game of Thrones* actress Sophie Turner that year. "That was too much," she said. "We laugh about it now."

CORY MONTEITH

"Mine"

Speak Now was a confessional album, and its lead track was her admission to *Glee* actor Cory Monteith about her fleeting feelings for him. "This is a situation where a guy that I just barely knew put his arm around me by the water, and I saw the entire relationship flash before my eyes, almost like some weird science-fiction movie," she revealed to *Yahoo! Music* in 2010. "After I wrote the song, things sort of fell apart, as things so often do."

Yet when "Mine" was released, Monteith read between the lines, realized it was about him and emailed her after not speaking for months. "I had no idea," he wrote. "I realize I've been naïve." Taylor had hoped the song, about her tendency to run from love, would also be "half-prediction"—which it was, just probably not the part she intended. Monteith never got to be "the best thing that's ever been mine" because she didn't reply to his message.

↑ Taylor attended a 2010 Grammy event with Cory Monteith, who died three years later.

JOHN MAYER

"Dear John"

Taylor's teenage heartbreak turned to unadulterated pain when it came to notorious Hollywood player John Mayer. The duo met in 2009 when they collaborated on his single "Half of My Heart"—and he pretty much crushed what was left of hers when they fizzled out months later. The lyrics for "Dear John," off *Speak Now*, are some of Taylor's most disturbing, as she recounts being manipulated by "dark, twisted games" and ignoring her mother's warning to stay away from the much older man (she was 19, he was 32) who had romanced the likes of Jessica Simpson and Jennifer Aniston: "All the girls that you've run dry / Have tired, lifeless eyes / 'Cause you burned them out / But I took your matches before fire could catch me."

But instead of apologizing for his behavior, Mayer doubled down. In a 2012 interview with *Rolling Stone*, he slammed "Dear John" as "cheap songwriting." Presenting himself as the victim, he continued: "It made me feel terrible. It was a really lousy thing to do. I never got an email. I never got a phone call. I was really caught off guard.... [That's] abusing your talent to rub your

↓ John Mayer had Taylor's gaze when they performed at 2009 Jingle Ball.

↓ The two Taylors went on a shopping date in Los Angeles in October 2009.

hands together and go, 'Wait till he gets a load of this!'"

Yet he did the same with his own diss track, 2013's "Paper Doll." In the chorus, he sings about a subject who is "22 girls in one"—presumably a nod to her hit single "22." Also, among the accessories he dresses the paper doll in: "a scarf, Moroccan red." Mayer concludes with a jab at one of Taylor's lines, "You paint me a blue sky / And go back and turn it to rain," telling the song's subject, "Someone's gonna paint you another sky."

TAYLOR LAUTNER

"Back to December"

In a rare role reversal, it was Taylor being the heartbreaker. In "Back to December," she recounts her relationship with Taylor Lautner, a guy with tan skin and a sweet smile who was "so good to me," and regretting how she treated him. Swallowing her pride, she imagines going back to that December night and changing the past in hopes for a future with the *Twilight* actor. But she can't, "so if the chain is on your door, I understand."

The musical apology was a first for Taylor, and she felt Lautner—her on-screen love in the 2010 romantic comedy *Valentine's Day*—was most deserving of it. "I think you should be able to say you're sorry to someone, and sometimes the best way I know how to say anything is in a song," she told Yahoo! Music. "I think that for me, especially playing that song for the first time for people around me, like my family and my friends, they made that point right away—like, 'You realize you've never done this before. You've never really apologized to someone in a song.' I guess I wasn't conscious of that when I was writing it, because it just was exactly what I needed to say. It wasn't like 'Oh, I haven't covered this emotion yet.'"

ADAM YOUNG

"Enchanted"

Another *Speak Now* confession, "Enchanted" is a power ballad about a one-time encounter with Owl City singer Adam Young that left the superstar feeling "wonderstruck." Leading up to their meeting, the two had communicated over email, and when they finally came face-to-face at an event in New York, it was so overwhelming for Taylor, she wrote about it as soon as she returned to her hotel room. "It just was this positive, wistful feeling of: I hope you understand just how much I loved meeting you. I hope that you know that meeting you was not something that I took lightly, or just in passing," she revealed to Yahoo! Music.

How would Young realize she had been "Enchanted" by him? "Wonderstruck." He used the word in an email to Taylor "so I purposely wrote it in the song, so he would know." He did—and he was equally spellbound by the singer. In response, on Valentine's Day 2011, he uploaded his cover of her track, with certain lyrics changed to reflect his feelings: "I was never in love with someone else / I never had somebody waiting on me / 'Cause you were all of my dreams come true / And I just wish you knew / Taylor I was so in love with you." Perhaps Taylor changed her tune, because she never publicly responded to the romantic overture.

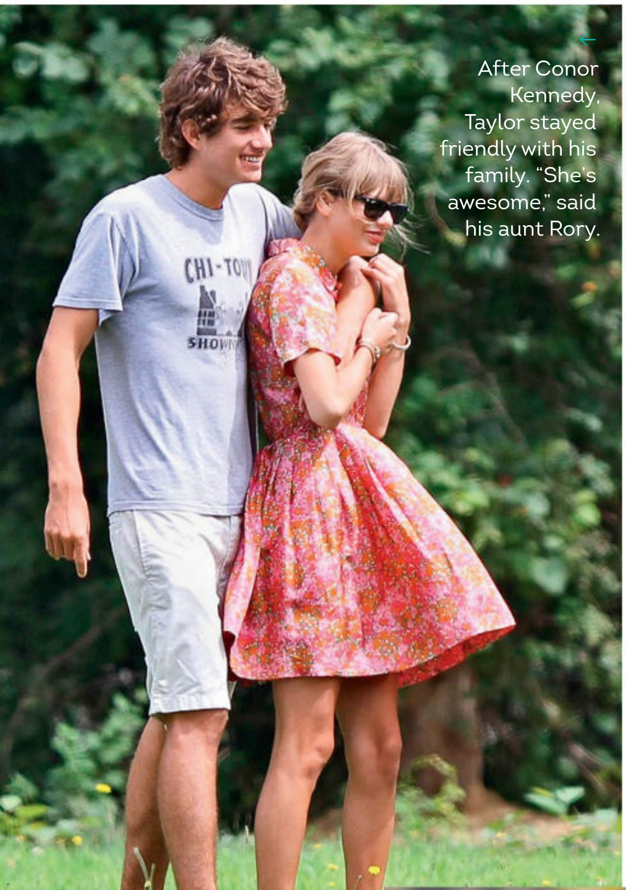
←
In the liner notes of *Speak Now*, Taylor included a hidden message that when decoded spells out "A-D-A-M."

↓ Similarly, in *Red*, the secret phrase was "Maple Latte," referring to both Jake Gyllenhaal and the Starbucks brew she's supposedly drinking in this photo.

JAKE GYLLENHAAL

"All Too Well"

Although it was only a three-month fling, to Taylor it was worthy of nearly an entire album. At least five songs on 2012's *Red* are believed to be about Jake Gyllenhaal, whom she dated from October 2010 to January 2011. "I look back on this as my only true break-up album," she told *Rolling Stone*. "Every other album has flickers of different things—this was an album that I wrote specifically about a pure, absolute, to-the-core heartbreak."



After Conor Kennedy, Taylor stayed friendly with his family. "She's awesome," said his aunt Rory.

"Haylor" went public in December 2012 when the two were spotted walking around Central Park.

There isn't a "Dear Jake," but Taylor dropped plenty of hints that the *Nightcrawler* actor was the heartbreaker in question. In "State of Grace," she sings about "twin fire signs, four blue eyes"—just like her and the fellow Sagittarius, who both celebrated birthdays six days (and nine years) apart that December. And in the video for "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," there are several Easter eggs that reference their brief relationship, such as an apple in a jar (they reportedly went apple-picking on a date) and her on-screen boyfriend giving Taylor his scarf—an obvious nod to her lyric in "All Too Well" about leaving the accessory "at your sister's house."

Nearly a decade later, when she released *Red (Taylor's Version)*, Taylor clearly wasn't done: She recorded a 10-minute version of the fan favorite "All Too Well" (plus a short film) that went even deeper into the breakdown of her relationship with Gyllenhaal. In the newly released lyrics, she revealed he had charmed her father, who then had to console his daughter when her boyfriend didn't show up at her 21st birthday party—which also inspired the vault track "The Moment I Knew." In it, Taylor sings about "standing there in my party dress" and looking around the room "but there was one thing missing and that was the moment I knew" it was over.

For his part, Gyllenhaal addressed his villainous depiction, while also calling for "empathy" from "unruly" Swifties. "It's her way of expressing herself," he told *Esquire Italia*. "Artists draw on their personal experiences to write songs and I'm not angry with her."

CONOR KENNEDY

"Starlight"

After Gyllenhaal, Taylor took some much-needed time to heal her broken heart—which she then gave to Conor Kennedy, the grandson of Ethel Kennedy and her late husband Robert, who was assassinated in 1968, while campaigning for president. The 23-year-old singer spent the entire summer of 2012 at the Kennedy family's Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, compound. While some believe "Begin Again" is about the rebound romance, it's actually another *Red* track, "Starlight," that was Kennedy-inspired—although not by Conor, but his grandparents.

Taylor explained to *The Wall Street Journal* that while looking at black-and-white photos from the 1940s, she had come across one of a young couple dancing, which turned out to be Ethel and Bobby when they were first dating. "It immediately made me think of like how much fun they must have had that night." Soon after writing "Starlight," she happened to meet their daughter Rory at one of her concerts—who not only introduced Taylor to Ethel, but also to her nephew Conor, the 18-year-old son of Robert Jr.

When summer ended, so did the relationship. According to reports, the split was "totally amicable." Even more harmonious, when Taylor sold the seven-bedroom Hyannis Port mansion she had purchased to be closer to the Kennedys, she made a cool $1 million profit.

HARRY STYLES

"Style"

Much like with Gyllenhaal, Taylor turned a short-lived romance with

←
At the 2015 Billboard Music Awards, Taylor and Calvin Harris got cozy for the cameras.

Harry Styles into an entire album of material. *1989*, released nearly two years after their January 2013 split, is filled with as many as seven songs inspired by their brief time together, such as the obvious "Style," as well as "Clean," about healing from the heartbreak. The two reportedly split after an argument while on a holiday during which the One Direction singer crashed a snowmobile and split open his chin. She recounted the scary moment in "Out of the Woods": "Remember when you hit the brakes too soon? / Twenty stitches in a hospital room / When you started crying, baby, I did too."

Unlike some other exes, Styles has gone on record to say he's flattered and praises Taylor as a "great songwriter." In a fun back-and-forth, he's even responded with his own lyrical take on their romance for his 2017 debut solo album. "Two Ghosts" references "Style"—"same red lips… same white shirt"—which she then acknowledged on "…Ready for It?" The *Reputation* opening track waxes poetic about a former, younger lover (Taylor is four years older than Styles): "Wonder how many girls he had loved and left haunted / But if he's a ghost then I can be a phantom."

CALVIN HARRIS

"I Did Something Bad"

Although they were together for 14 months, Taylor didn't waste too much time writing about Calvin Harris. However, when they broke up in May 2016, it was so messy she had to defend her reputation on the "cathartic" 2017 track "I Did Something Bad": Following the split, the Scottish DJ blasted his ex on Twitter, accusing her of everything from exaggerating her involvement in writing his Rihanna collab "This Is What You Came For" to cheating. Instead of defending herself publicly, Taylor set the record straight with her lyrics. Describing Harris as a "narcissist" and "playboy," the singer reveals that for every lie she told, he told three. Also, she contended she had to leave the relationship before getting left, singing: "I don't regret it one bit, 'cause he had it coming."

TOM HIDDLESTON

"Getaway Car"

The overlap that Harris hinted at turned out to be with Tom Hiddleston, whom Taylor met in May 2016 when they cochaired the Met Gala. And in her 2017 track "Getaway Car," off *Reputation*, she addressed it honestly: "I wanted to leave him / I needed a reason." But after just four months with Hiddleston—during which the *Loki* actor famously wore an "I [heart] TS" T-shirt—the romance ran out of gas. As Taylor explained in "Getaway Car," her ex's incessant trash-talking turned the relationship into a sideshow "and a circus ain't a love story."

↓
Taylor and Tom Hiddleston traveled a lot during their time together, including this trip to Australia in July 2016.

The SQUA

The superstar's tight-knit group of friends includes A-list celebrities and a select few childhood pals who keep her grounded.

During a stop on The 1989 World Tour, Taylor was joined by (from left) "Bad Blood" costars Hailee Steinfeld, Gigi Hadid, Lily Aldridge and Lena Dunham.

Guys may come and go, but Taylor Swift's friendships are (mostly) forever and always. Her world-famous squad includes supermodels (Gigi Hadid), actresses (Selena Gomez), fellow singers (Haim) and even a select few lucky men, like Ed Sheeran and Todrick Hall. They've been by her side at awards shows, appeared in music videos and joined her onstage at concerts, as well as private moments celebrating holidays and personal milestones.

Taylor's "Squad," as it was dubbed by the media, originated around the time of her "Bad Blood" video, an epic who's who of A-listers. Among the famous faces in the ensemble cast backing up the singer: Gomez, Hadid, Karlie Kloss, Zendaya, Lena Dunham, Hayley Williams, Jessica Alba and Cindy Crawford, as well as TV stars Ellen Pompeo and Mariska Hargitay, for whom Taylor named her two cats (see page 75 for more).

By that point, the Squad's members had been tight with Taylor for several years, with the first being Williams, who met the country singer at the 2008 Grammys when Taylor was introduced to Williams' Nashville-based band Paramore by Andrea Swift. Three years later, during a hometown stop on the Fearless tour, Williams joined Taylor onstage to duet on Paramore's hit "That's What You Get." Although the two haven't been as close in recent years, they're still each other's biggest fans. When *evermore* dropped in 2020, Williams praised her pal's second pandemic offering as the "coolest album Taylor's ever made." "This made my heart race/double in size/turn into a confetti cloud of petals, thank you so much," Taylor tweeted in reply. "You're incredible. And this was so nice to read."

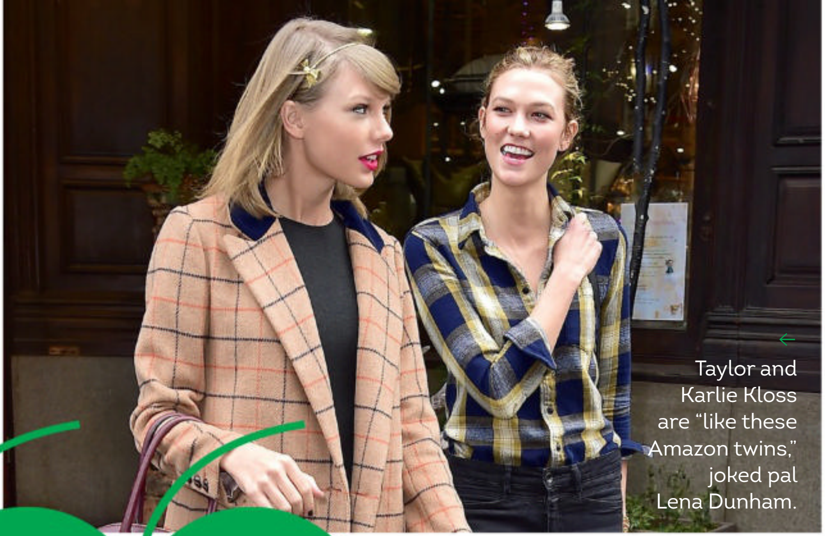
Taylor's other longtime famous friend is none other than Selena Gomez—still one of her nearest and dearest. The two met backstage at a 2008 Jonas Brothers concert when the Disney star was dating Nick Jonas and Taylor, of course, was with his brother Joe. The singer-actress has made several cameos on Taylor's world tours to perform her biggest hits, like "Who Says," "Good For You" and "Hands to Myself."

But on a personal level, Taylor has also been there for Gomez during low points, particularly during her relationship with Justin Bieber. "One of my favorite stories with Taylor Swift was when I was going through a very hard breakup. She came to my house at 10:30 at night and knocked on my door. I opened it, and she had two big bags of junk food, cookies, Snickers and soda. She put it on the table, put her laptop on, we made a video, and she told me that now we could look forward to breakups, since we know the other one will get us junk food."

In addition to her bond with fellow singers, 5-foot-11 Taylor also found common ground with the supertall supermodels of Victoria's Secret. For her performance at the lingerie brand's iconic annual fashion show in 2013, she formed close ties offstage with Lily Aldridge, Cara Delevingne and of course Karlie Kloss, who rose

Taylor and Selena Gomez bonded more deeply during their lows than their highs: "We both went through s--t at the same time," says Gomez.

↑
Ed Sheeran has been both a friend and collaborator to Taylor (here together in 2015).



←
Taylor and Karlie Kloss are "like these Amazon twins," joked pal Lena Dunham.

↑
Taylor brought along high school bestie Abigail Anderson to the 2015 Grammys.

> **A GOOD GIRLFRIEND, FOR ME, IS SOMEONE WHO'S AN INDIVIDUAL, AND HAS SOMETHING THAT THEY'RE DEEPLY PASSIONATE ABOUT."**
>
> Taylor Swift, to *Entertainment Tonight*

through the ranks to be Taylor's No. 1 BFF. In 2014, the look-alike twosome—dubbed "Kaylor" by fans—embarked on a California road trip that was documented for the cover of the March issue of *Vogue*. And any time Kloss came to visit her house, Taylor had a basket of her favorite snacks from Whole Foods in a guest room, according to *Rolling Stone*.

But by 2018, the pair seemed to have their own bad blood: Amid Taylor's feud with Katy Perry, Kloss captioned an Instagram video of herself dribbling a basketball "Swish swish," the title of Perry's diss track about Taylor. She later edited it to read "Nothing but net," but the damage was clearly done. That October, Taylor wasn't in attendance at Kloss' wedding to Joshua Kushner. And the following year, the model signed with manager Scooter Braun—the very man Taylor has said incessantly bullied her (and who went on to purchase the rights to her first six albums). Although the two still follow each other on social media, they don't interact, not even when Kloss announced the birth of her son in March 2021.

There is another squad member, however, who has welcomed Taylor into her family life. Actress-model Jaime King named her the godmother of her second child, a boy named Leo, in 2015. Taylor—who hosted a baby shower attended by the likes of Gigi Hadid, Hailee Steinfeld, Nina Dobrev and Diane Kruger—was the ideal choice, King told *People*, "because of her morals and her values, the way that she treats people and how hardworking she is...her family and how close she is to them. I see what she gives out there to her fans and to her family. That's the kind of person I want to be the guide and the spiritual protector of my child."

Taylor's longest-running, unofficial squad member is family friend Britany Maack, whom she met when she was just 10 days old. And although their lives took drastically different paths, their bond has always remained a constant. "My favorite accomplishment of my entire life is that everything in my life has changed except for me and Britany," Taylor revealed in her maid of honor speech at her friend's 2016 wedding to Benjamin LaManna—whom Taylor has also known since she was 4! "She was my partner in crime at Brownies sleep-away camp, and she was my date to the Grammys." And when Taylor went on to make famous friends, Maack seamlessly fit in with the A-list group, posing for #CoupleGoals photos with the likes of Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds.

Even the most basic Swiftie likely knows all too well Taylor's other longtime BFF, "red-headed Abigail" Anderson immortalized in her *Fearless* single "Fifteen." The two met in freshman English class on the first day of school in 2004, the year the Swifts moved to Nashville, Tennessee. As Taylor's music career gained traction with the release of "Tim McGraw" during her sophomore year, she transitioned to homeschooling—but first, she discussed the major decision with her closest friend. "She called me one night and we had to have the talk about [how] she's not coming back to school," Anderson told the *Lawrence Journal-World* in 2009. "We dealt with it, and we've actually gotten closer since."

Indeed, Taylor has always kept Anderson close in both her personal and professional worlds, with appearances in her videos for "Picture to Burn," "Fifteen," "Teardrops on My Guitar" and "22." And early in her music career, Taylor's "perfect" day off was going to visit her friend at the University of Kansas, where she was pursuing her dream of competitive swimming. "You always kind of wonder about the path you didn't take," Taylor revealed to oprah.com in 2009. By hanging out with Anderson in Lawrence, Kansas, she got to "experience college without having to take tests and study."

As an adult, Taylor credits several friends with helping her successfully navigate life—and Hollywood. One of her greatest influences has been Gomez, and the feeling is mutual. "There has always been this quality of sisterhood, and I don't say that in a basic way," Taylor told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2020. "I knew from when I met her I would always have her back. In my life, I have the ability to forgive people who have hurt me. But I don't know if I can forgive someone who hurts her." Indeed, adds Gomez, "She taught me a lot about how I should be treated at a young age.... It's been proven year after year and in every moment of my life that she is one of my best friends in the world."

← "Meredith is one of the best cats," Taylor has said of the 11-year-old.

FELINE FRIENDS

WITH THREE OF HER OWN, THE STAR IS A SELF-PROFESSED (AND VERY PROUD) CAT LADY.

Through the ups and downs of Taylor Swift's life, the one constant has been her cats: Meredith Grey, Olivia Benson and Benjamin Button. The singer got Meredith—whose name was inspired by her love of *Grey's Anatomy*—in 2011, followed three years later by Olivia, named for Mariska Hargitay's character on *Law & Order: SVU*. Before she brought Olivia home, she conferred with her friends. "Is two cats...cat lady?" she recalled asking on *Live With Kelly and Michael* in 2014. "And they're like, 'No, three cats is a cat lady. Two cats is a party.'"

Taylor officially joined the cat-lady club after falling in love with a blue-eyed ragdoll feline on the set of her 2019 music video "ME!" Before filming a scene in which Brendon Urie gifts the singer a kitten, Taylor met the animal actor and was instantly smitten. In a behind-the-scenes clip, she cuddles the purring cutie and jokingly asks, "Can I have him?"—and her jaw drops when she learns he's available for adoption. Backstage, she introduced her parents to the kitten, named Benjamin Button after the character from an F. Scott Fitzgerald short story who ages in reverse and was portrayed in a film by Brad Pitt. "Gosh, I am obsessed with this animal!" she gushed to her father, Scott.

The trio go just about everywhere with their owner, from red carpets to world tours. Their likeness has also appeared on Taylor's official merchandise, and in 2019 she applied to trademark the names "Meredith, Olivia & Benjamin Swift." As for Taylor's role in the remake of *Cats*, it was inspired by her beloved pets. "I just thought, like, I gotta do this," she joked to *Time*. "This is my calling in life."

THEN &

→
Taylor made her debut at the 2006 Academy of Country Music Awards five months before she dropped her self-titled album.

←
In 2022, Taylor, now a genre-spanning superstar, took home six awards, including Artist of the Year, at the American Music Awards.

NOW

SHE'S COME A LONG WAY FROM THE AMBITIOUS GIRL WHO MOVED TO NASHVILLE WITH A GUITAR AND A DREAM. TWO DECADES LATER, SHE'S ONE OF THE BIGGEST STARS ON THE PLANET. TAKE A LOOK BACK AT HER JOURNEY.

RISING STAR

Growing up in Pennsylvania, the young singer's biggest fans were her parents Scott and Andrea, and brother Austin.

↑ With seven horses on the family's farm, Taylor, here with little brother Austin, got into competitive riding.

→ The biggest challenge of singing the national anthem, says Taylor (here in 2002), "is the utter silence that comes over 40,000 people."

Taylor-Made for Music

SHE WAS NAMED AFTER A FAMOUS SINGER-SONGWRITER.

Even before Taylor Swift was born, her parents decided they didn't want their daughter to face any challenges because of her gender. So they gave their baby a unisex name: Taylor, after singer-songwriter James Taylor. Growing up, she had no idea of their connection—until she gushed to her mom about "Fire and Rain," "one of the most fantastic, amazing songs I've ever heard in my life." Years later, her namesake joined her onstage at Madison Square Garden in 2011 for a duet of the 1970 hit. She always thought she'd see him again—the next year, they reunited for an encore.

Whether Taylor Swift was performing in a karaoke contest at a local bar or at New York City's Madison Square Garden, two people have always been in the audience: her parents, Scott and Andrea Swift. From an early age, it was clear their firstborn was uniquely talented—and that she took after another member of the family, Andrea's mother, Marjorie Finlay, an opera singer. "She was one of my first inspirations," Taylor told the *Sunday Times* of her grandmother, who passed away in 2003. "She always wanted to be onstage, whether she was in the middle of her living room or in church; she just loved it. And when she would walk into a room, everyone would look at her, no matter what; she had this 'thing,' this It factor. I always noticed it—that she was different from everyone else."

And so was Taylor. Growing up in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, a small rural town known as Tree City USA, the spirited girl and her younger brother, Austin spent their early years living on an 11-acre Christmas tree farm, her stockbroker father's second business. "It was the most magical, wonderful place in the world," gushed Taylor. When she wasn't chasing after the many cats that lived on the property, she was indulging her other favorite pastime: Disney movies. At the age of 3, "I'd be singing every single song from the movie on the car ride home, word for word," she told British newspaper *The Times* in 2009. "And my parents noticed that once I had run out of words I would just make up my own. I was that annoying kid who ran around singing for random strangers."

But soon, she'd find a slightly bigger stage. At the age of 10, after seeing a production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Taylor auditioned for the local children's theater company and scored several leading roles, including Sandy in *Grease* and Maria in *The Sound of Music*. She stood out, and not just

← Taylor always danced to the beat of her own drum, choosing to focus on the things she loved—especially singing and writing music—which often made her an outcast among the other kids at school. Home was her happy place and in 2019 she celebrated all those good memories in the holiday single "Christmas Tree Farm."

CHRISTMAS TREE FARM
TAYLOR SWIFT

> **ALL THE GIRLS AT SCHOOL WERE GOING TO SLEEPOVERS AND BREAKING INTO THEIR PARENTS' LIQUOR CABINETS ON THE WEEKEND, AND ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS GO TO FESTIVALS AND SING KARAOKE MUSIC."**
>
> Taylor Swift, to the *Daily Mail*

because she was taller than the other kids: "My singing sounded a lot more country than Broadway," admitted Taylor, a fan of Faith Hill, Shania Twain and Dixie Chicks. Eager to perform music from her favorite genre, she signed up for karaoke contests at a local roadhouse, always with her protective parents in tow. "They were kind of embarrassed by it, I guess," said Taylor. "This little girl singing in this smoky bar. But they knew how much it meant to me, so they went along with it." She eventually won the championship, with her rendition of "Big Deal" by LeAnn Rimes, a country superstar only a few years older than Taylor.

By the age of 12, she was ready for the next step: singing the national anthem at local sports games. Starting out with minor league baseball team the Reading Phillies, she soon advanced to the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers. "I figured out that if you could sing that one song, you could get in front of 20,000 people without even having a record deal," she dished to *Rolling Stone*.

After one performance, none other than Jay-Z gave the middle schooler a high five, and "I bragged about that for like a year straight." But not everyone was so congratulatory—especially so-called friends who were overcome with jealousy. "I kind of started to live in fear when I would sing the national anthem at the 76ers game," Taylor admitted. "If there was a write-up about it the next day in our local paper, I knew it was gonna be a bad day at school for me."

Any time that happened, Andrea was there to pick up the pieces—or in some shattering moments, her heartbroken daughter. "She was shunned. After school, I'd hear what nightmare had occurred that day, what awful thing was done to her. I'd have to pick her up off the floor." Most days, Andrea was her daughter's only true friend, and as Taylor described it, "my escape." "She would just take me on these adventures and we would drive around and go to towns we'd never seen before." She revisited those times in "The Best Day," a song Taylor wrote and recorded as a Christmas gift for her mother years before it appeared on *Fearless*. On Christmas Eve, she synced up the track to home movie clips, "and [Andrea] was crying her eyes out." It's emotional for Taylor too—she eventually had to stop performing the song in concert.

Her relationship with her father Scott is special in its own way. Taylor describes him as kind and an optimistic teddy bear of a man with his "head in the clouds," unlike her practical mother. "And so I'm a dreamer, and my imagination goes to places where love lasts forever and everything is covered in glitter, and that's from my dad's personality. Every time I walk offstage, he tells me how much he loved it, or how he was standing at the soundboard, crying. But my mom, she'll tell me exactly what she saw." The perfect balance for their ambitious daughter, Scott and Andrea would have moved heaven and earth for her. As it turned out, they wouldn't have to go that far—only 700 miles, to Nashville, Tennessee. After Taylor watched a TV special on Faith Hill's meteoric rise to fame in Music City, she was convinced "that's where I need to go."

That spring break in 2001, Andrea and her daughter loaded up the family car with copies of a demo tape Taylor made using karaoke tracks and headed south to visit record labels along the famed Music Row. While her mom waited in the car, the little girl with big dreams fearlessly walked into each office and introduced herself. "I would say, 'Hi, I'm Taylor. I'm 11; I want a record deal. Call me,'" she recalled to *Entertainment Weekly* in 2008. Each label said the same thing: Kids don't listen to country music. And the average fan, in the 35-and-older demographic, doesn't want to listen to a kid. "Basically all the record companies went, 'Ah, how cute.... Give up your dreams. Go home and come back when you're 18.'"

What could change their minds sooner? Taylor decided to set herself apart by playing guitar and writing her own songs. "I actually learned on a 12-string, purely because some guy told me that I'd never be able to play it, that my fingers were too small," she bragged to *Teen Vogue*. The audacity was typical Taylor, but even Andrea was shocked by her daughter's devotion, as she practiced four hours a day—six on weekends. "She would get calluses on her fingers and they would crack and bleed, and we would tape them up and she'd just keep on playing," Andrea told *EW*.

When Taylor returned to Nashville two years later—with a demo tape of songs she wrote herself—labels took notice. The 13-year-old signed a development deal with RCA, but ultimately let it lapse when they discouraged her from recording her own music. It was clear Taylor was on the right path—she just needed to get a little closer to her destination. So in 2004, the Swift family relocated from Pennsylvania to Hendersonville, a suburb outside Nashville. But there was no pressure on the teen. "I never wanted to make that move about her 'making it,'" Andrea explained to *EW*. "We've always told her that this is not about putting food on our table or making our dreams come true."

→ The Georgian Colonial home was built in 1929 by a prominent local family.

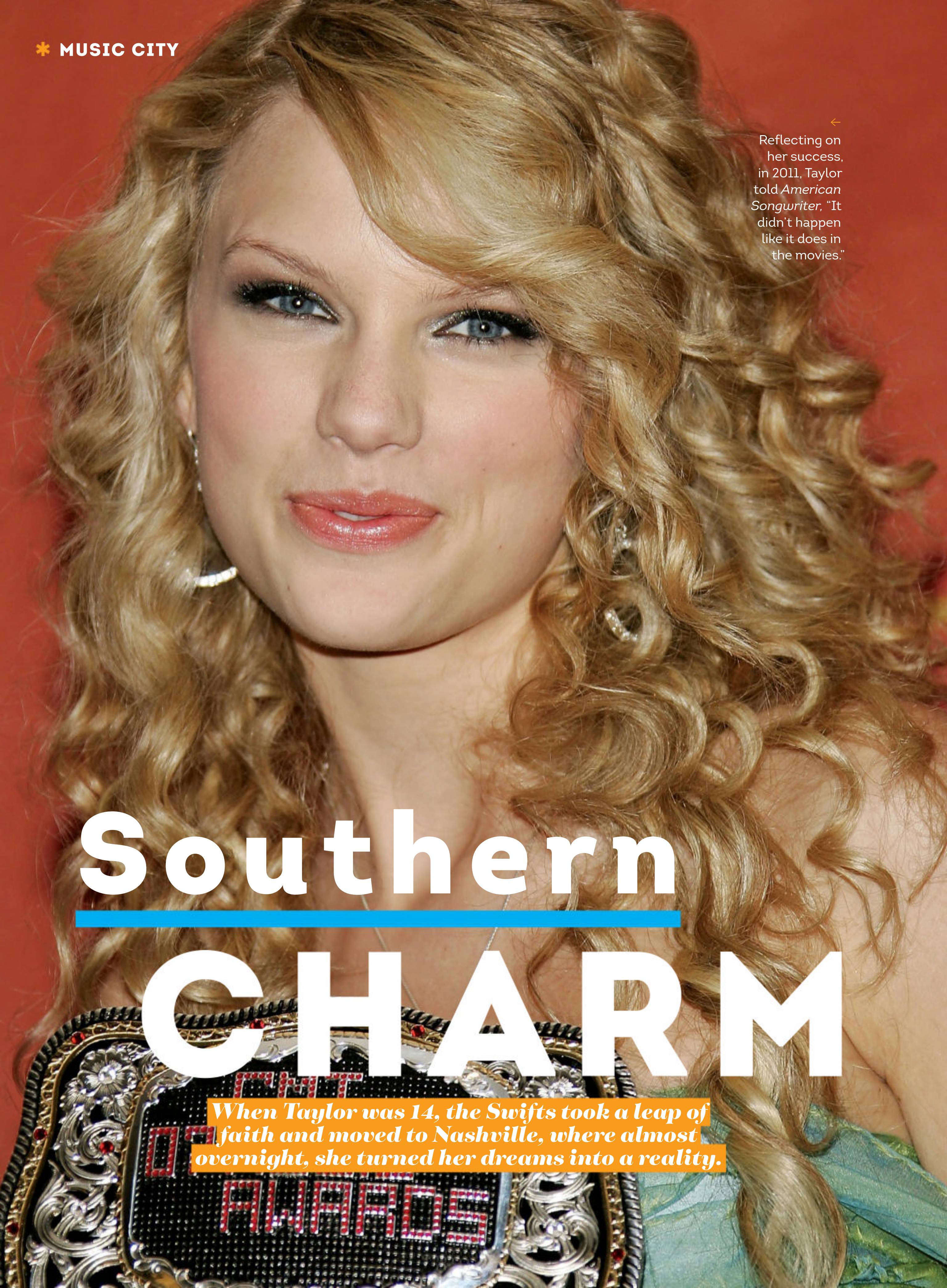
HER $1 MILLION CHILDHOOD HOME

THE PLACE WHERE SHE WROTE HER VERY FIRST SONG HITS THE REAL ESTATE MARKET.

After living on the Christmas tree farm (before the move to Tennessee), the Swift family owned a three-story Georgian Colonial in Reading, Pennsylvania—that is immortalized in Taylor's 2008 song "The Best Day."

True to her lyric "I grew up in a pretty home," the five-bedroom is an enchanting estate straight out of a fairy tale, with a grand entryway flanked by columns, a sweeping staircase, a formal dining room, crown molding, vaulted ceilings and French doors. It's also reportedly the place where Taylor learned to play guitar at 12 and wrote several of her early songs.

In February 2022, the mansion hit the market for $1.099 million, but wasn't immediately snapped up despite the fact it's practically a musical landmark. The price was cut by $100,000 and after a pending sale fell through, another $75,000 was shaved off in May—when it caught the attention of a prospective buyer. The deal comes with a feature no other house has: Taylor Swift's autograph! The singer once signed her initials in the cement outside.



Reflecting on her success, in 2011, Taylor told *American Songwriter*, "It didn't happen like it does in the movies."

Southern CHARM

When Taylor was 14, the Swifts took a leap of faith and moved to Nashville, where almost overnight, she turned her dreams into a reality.

Would the city that launched country superstars Dolly Parton and Faith Hill be as hospitable to a Northern transplant? In 2004, the Swifts decided to find out by uprooting themselves from Pennsylvania and starting a new life near Nashville, Tennessee, so 14-year-old Taylor could pursue her dream of becoming a singer. Three months later, *The Reading Eagle* caught up with the family as they settled into Hendersonville, home to Johnny Cash: "While most of her peers are dreaming themselves into the pictures of music stars taped to their walls, Taylor Swift is living the dream." And she had to pinch herself sometimes. "It's really just been awesome," she gushed to her hometown newspaper. "I can't imagine not being here and not doing this. I feel it was meant to be."

↑ On Thanksgiving Day 2006, Taylor kicked off the Miami Dolphins-Detroit Lions football game.

For Taylor, it was not about luck or having the right connections. The moment she arrived in Nashville, she hit the ground running. That summer, before starting ninth grade, while most kids were hanging out with friends, she was holed up in songwriting sessions with pros more than twice her age. For her first meeting with Brett Beavers, Taylor walked in with 15 tracks ready to polish with the veteran who had penned hits for Tim McGraw and Martina McBride. "I knew the stereotype people had when they heard the words '14-year-old girl' was that I wasn't going to do the hard work, and I wanted people to know that I was," she told *The New York Times*. "I need people to know that I care and that this is important to me." By July, she had already written 84 songs.

Even when she started school that fall, Taylor remained dedicated to her passion—all while maintaining an A average. In November, just six months after moving to Nashville, she signed a songwriting deal with Sony/ATV Publishing, making her the youngest artist on the company's roster (Taylor would turn 15 weeks later). Sony exec Arturo Buenahora was convinced within minutes of hearing her perform in his office. "The songs were great, but it was her, really," he told *The New Yorker* in 2011. "She was a star. She lit up the room. I liked her attitude. She was very easy to root for." Every afternoon, Andrea Swift picked up Taylor from Hendersonville High and drove her downtown to write with local hitmakers. "I was a teenager during the day when I was at school, and then at night it was like I was 45," Taylor joked to *The Telegraph*.

> **"[MY PARENTS] NEVER SAW MY PASSION FADE. THEY SAW HOW HAPPY IT MADE ME, HOW OBSESSED I WAS WITH GOING TO NASHVILLE, AND FOR THEM, IT WAS A REMARKABLE LEAP OF FAITH."**
>
> Taylor Swift, to the *Los Angeles Daily News*

Inspiration could come anytime, anywhere—even in the middle of the school day. Such was the case with "Tim McGraw," which would go on to be her first single. While sitting in math class her freshman year, she scribbled the lyrics in her notebook. To capture the melody before she forgot, Taylor sneaked out to the restroom, where she recorded it as a voice memo on her iPhone. "When teachers conducted random notebook checks they'd be freaked out—but they learned to deal with me," she told the *Miami Herald* in 2008. "I've seen her pull out a Kleenex and write a song on it," added Taylor's best friend Abigail Anderson, whom she'd met in English class that year.

Although Taylor was focusing on songwriting, she hadn't forgotten about her second love, performing—and one of her first showcases ended up being the one she needed to launch her career (read more on page 86). In 2005, just ahead of her 16th birthday, she signed with music exec Scott Borchetta's brand-new Big Machine Records. "I've had the good fortune of breaking everybody from Trisha Yearwood all the way up to Sugarland with big stops in between," he told *Billboard* in 2006. "This feels as big as any of them." Not everyone was convinced. Many industry colleagues believed Borchetta was rolling the dice trying to turn a teenager into a country star. "People would look at me cross-eyed," he told *The New York Times*. "I would feel like they were deleting me from their BlackBerrys as I was telling them."

Taylor also had a lot to prove. Immediately after inking the deal with Big Machine, she headed into the studio with Nathan Chapman, the producer on her demos—but he had never made a full-length album before and plans changed. "Then, all of a sudden, it was, 'OK, we're going to use this producer' or 'We're going to use that producer,'" Taylor told CMT. "So I got to record with a bunch of really awesome producers in Nashville. But it didn't sound the way that it did with Nathan." After petitioning Borchetta that she had "the right chemistry" with Chapman, he relented. "Finally my record label president said, 'OK, try some sides with Nathan.'" Chapman ended up

↑ At the 2007 CMT Music Awards, Taylor mingled backstage with Blake Shelton.

> **MY SESSIONS WITH TAYLOR WERE SOME OF THE EASIEST I'VE EVER DONE. SHE HAD SUCH A CLEAR VISION OF WHAT SHE WAS TRYING TO SAY. AND SHE'D COME IN WITH SOME OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE HOOKS."**
>
> Songwriter Liz Rose, to *Blender* magazine

←
"I was just blown away by her songs," Scott Borchetta has said of his first impression of Taylor.

producing every one of the 11 tracks on her debut album, *Taylor Swift*, which was recorded in just four months.

Although she'd only been writing songs for four years, Taylor had enough material to fill four lifetimes. Finalizing the track list took some second-guessing, but selecting the first single was a no-brainer: "Tim McGraw," a song she wrote as a freshman about her senior boyfriend going off to college and all the things that would remind her of him (like the fact that he was a Tim McGraw fan). When she first played it for Borchetta while strumming a ukulele, he replied, "That's your first single." Ahead of its release, Big Machine launched a grassroots campaign. "They only had 10 employees at the record label to start out with, so when they were releasing my first single, my mom and I came in to help stuff the CD singles into envelopes to send to radio," she recalled to *Entertainment Weekly* in 2008. "We sat out on the floor and did it because there wasn't furniture at the label yet."

On June 19, 2006, "Tim McGraw" dropped—and introduced the world to country's next big thing. Just like Taylor's musical tastes, the song straddled genres and went on to peak at No. 40 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. "With her first song, Swift immediately showed her Nashville peers she could beat any of them at their own game, acing the classic genre trope of nostalgic country song about how country music is nostalgic," praised *Rolling Stone* in 2020 when it ranked "Tim McGraw" at No. 11 on its list of 100 Greatest Debut Singles of All Time.

Although her youth initially seemed to work against her in the tradition-bound country music scene, it turned out to work in her favor, as Taylor leveraged MySpace to market her album to a younger demographic. The teen interacted with her fans daily via blog posts and the comments section—and she took their feedback to heart. Her second single, "Our Song," would have been left on the

→ "The Bluebird Cafe is the heart of Music City," Taylor told CMT.

The Performance That Changed Everything

IN 2004, SHE WAS DISCOVERED AT NASHVILLE'S FAMED BLUEBIRD CAFE.

Anyone who's anyone has played at the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville, Tennessee. Back in 1987, a young Garth Brooks was discovered at the famed music venue. Seventeen years later, lightning struck twice when 14-year-old Taylor Swift took the tiny stage on Nov. 4, 2004, for a songwriter showcase. With just an acoustic guitar, Taylor performed three originals: "Songs About You," "Me and Britney" and "Beautiful Eyes." That night, there was someone in the crowd who would change her life: Scott Borchetta, an executive at Universal Music Group's Nashville division, whom she'd met days earlier. Taylor recognized him, and noticed he had his eyes closed the whole time: "He was listening better than anyone in the room."

After the show, Borchetta made Taylor a complicated offer. "The good news is that I want to sign you to a record deal. The bad news is that I'm no longer with Universal Records." His new venture was an independent label, Big Machine Records—and he asked Taylor to wait until it launched, and not sign with anyone else in the meantime. "The way he said it convinced me that there was something going on that I wanted to be a part of," she said.

Fourteen years later, Taylor returned to the place where it all began. In 2018, for a documentary on the Bluebird's 35th anniversary, she made a surprise appearance during songwriter Craig Wiseman's set. With only 40 people in the room, the superstar performed several of her hits, including "Love Story" and "Shake It Off"—and she even did a Fireball shot! "I wanted to say a big thank you to the Bluebird Cafe," Taylor told the crowd. "I think any songwriter in town would echo my sentiments and say that this is kind of the only place where this exists—this particular place where you get to come and hear the writer's take on the songs they've put out into the world."

→
In February 2007, Taylor performed "Tim McGraw" on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno.*

cutting-room floor if it hadn't been for social media. As Taylor's then-manager Rick Barker pointed out to *EW*, "It was the last song added to the album, and a lot of that had to do with buzz that was being created on MySpace."

The platform, along with texting, were innovations for country music. "This kind of flies in the face of how to market a new artist from Nashville," RJ Curtis, country editor for trade magazine *Radio & Records*, explained at the time. "It's partly her being in that life group and using the things teens use to communicate and spread music around, but her label had a lot of savvy in that area too." And so did her mother: Andrea, a former marketing manager, set up her daughter's website, taylorswift.com.

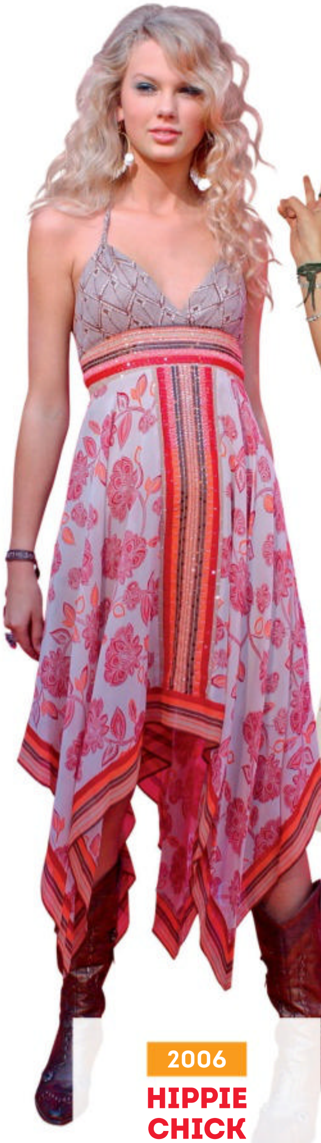
As her music dreams became a reality, Taylor had to let go of the one reminder that she was indeed still a teenager. Following her sophomore year, it was decided she would be homeschooled—but not after first calling her best friend Anderson to talk it out. Although she did return to campus to attend the occasional football game, there were no parties for Taylor. "BMI and Sony parties are the ones I like," she insisted in an interview held in Big Machine's basement a few weeks after the Oct. 24, 2006, release of *Taylor Swift*.

While on tour the following year, she ended up back in her hometown of Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, where she played to a sold-out crowd. "It was amazing; ever since all this stuff started happening, the people [here] have been the most supportive people I've ever known," Taylor raved to *EW*. "But I wouldn't change a thing about growing up and not exactly fitting in. If I had been popular, I probably wouldn't have wanted to leave."

> **"I'M STILL IN THE 'OH-MY-GOSH-THIS-IS-REALLY-HAPPENING' PHASE.... I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GRASP THE FACT THAT IF I SIGN A PIECE OF PAPER, IT MIGHT MEAN SOMETHING TO SOMEBODY."**
>
> Taylor, to CMT in 2006

IN STYLE

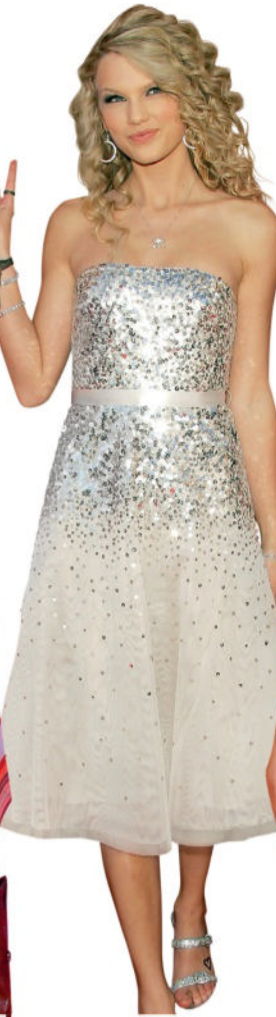
The star's come a long way from the country cutie in cowboy boots—see her evolution to 'red lip classic thing that you like' and beyond.



2006

HIPPIE CHICK

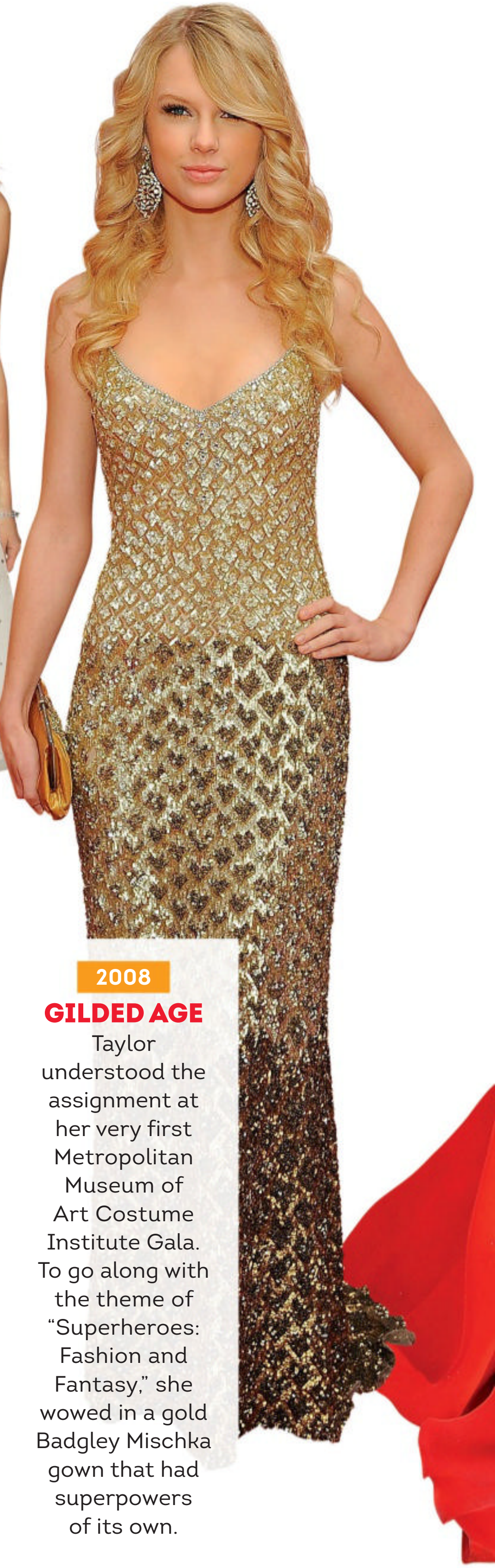
One of Taylor's earliest red-carpet moments, she kept it casual in a BCBG Max Azria silk handkerchief dress with brown cowboy boots at the Academy of Country Music Awards. It was her first time at the event; the next year, she won for New Female Vocalist.



2007

LITTLE BIT COUNTRY

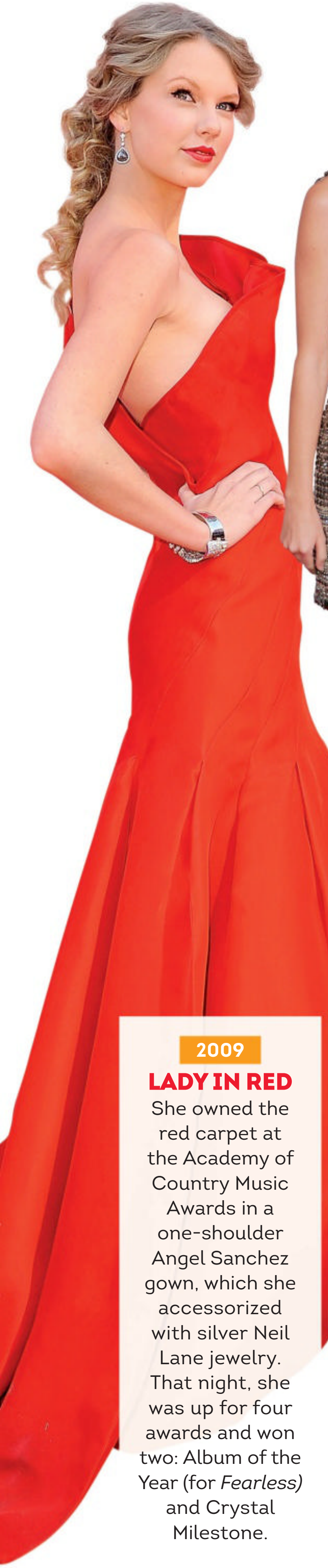
For the CMT Music Awards, the 17-year-old added a little edge to her prim and proper knee-length sequined tulle dress from BCBG Max Azria with a skull necklace. Fans got a close-up look when she accepted her trophy for Breakthrough Video of the Year.



2008

GILDED AGE

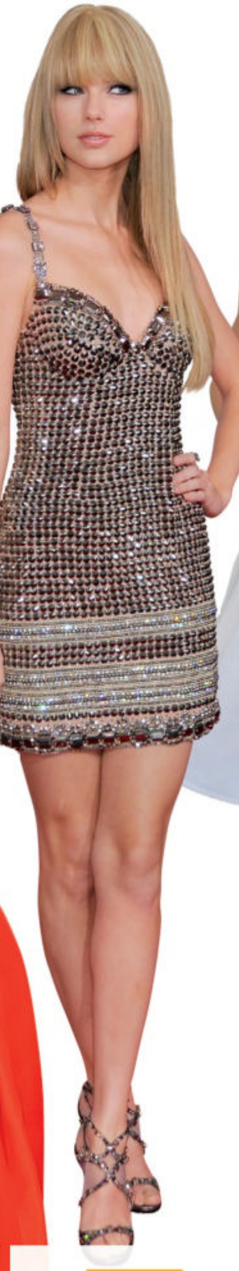
Taylor understood the assignment at her very first Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute Gala. To go along with the theme of "Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy," she wowed in a gold Badgley Mischka gown that had superpowers of its own.



2009

LADY IN RED

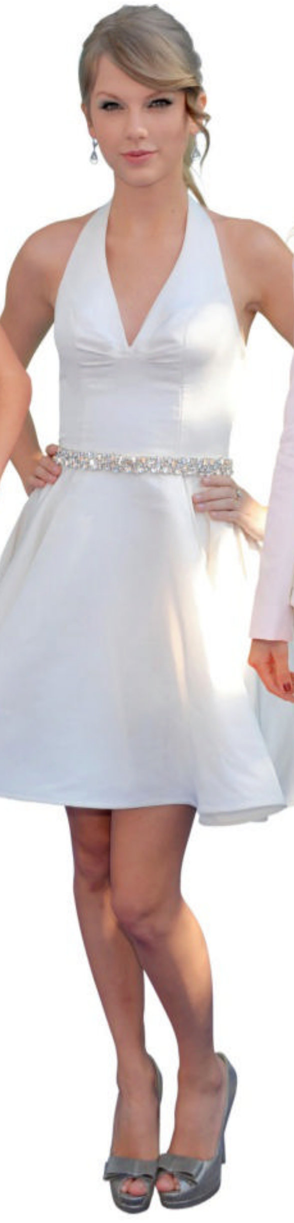
She owned the red carpet at the Academy of Country Music Awards in a one-shoulder Angel Sanchez gown, which she accessorized with silver Neil Lane jewelry. That night, she was up for four awards and won two: Album of the Year (for *Fearless)* and Crystal Milestone.



2010

SHORT & SLEEK

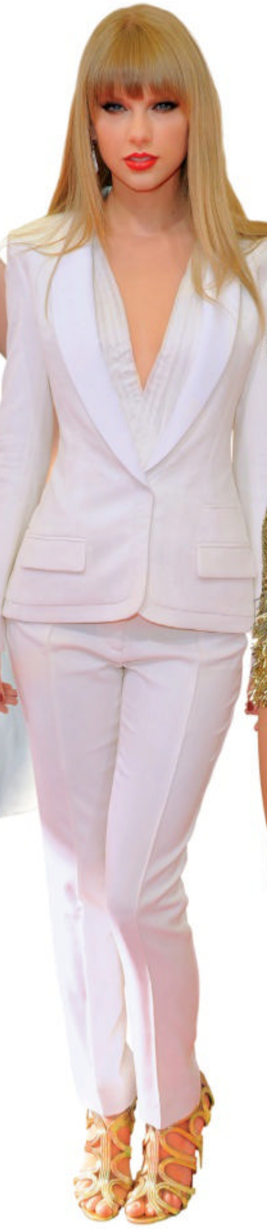
Taylor debuted a different vibe at the American Music Awards. Not only did she straighten her curls (and experiment with clip-on bangs), she opted for a shorter hemline in a Collette Dinnigan embellished mini. On her feet: studded Jimmy Choos.



2011

MARILYN MOMENT

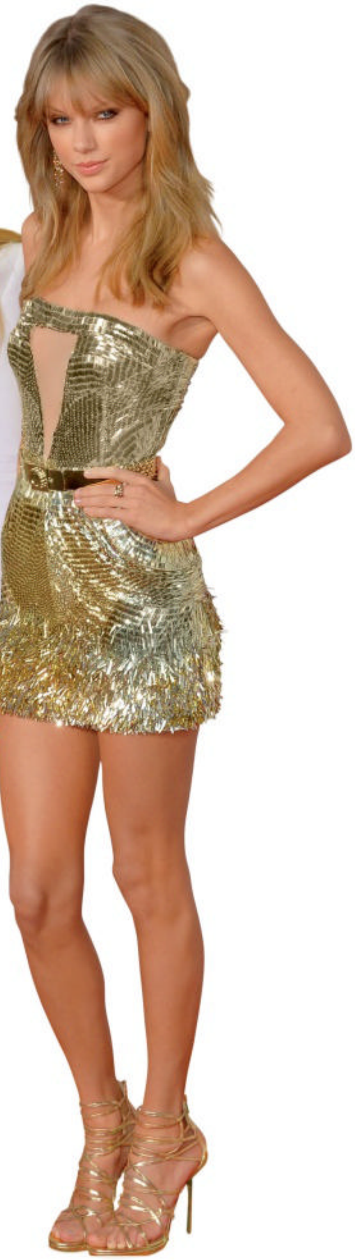
At the Teen Choice Awards—where she was nominated for seven awards—the singer evoked Marilyn Monroe in a halter A-line dress with embellished waist by Rafael Cennamo. It was the perfect look to accept her award for Red Carpet Hot Icon.



2012

ALL BUSINESS

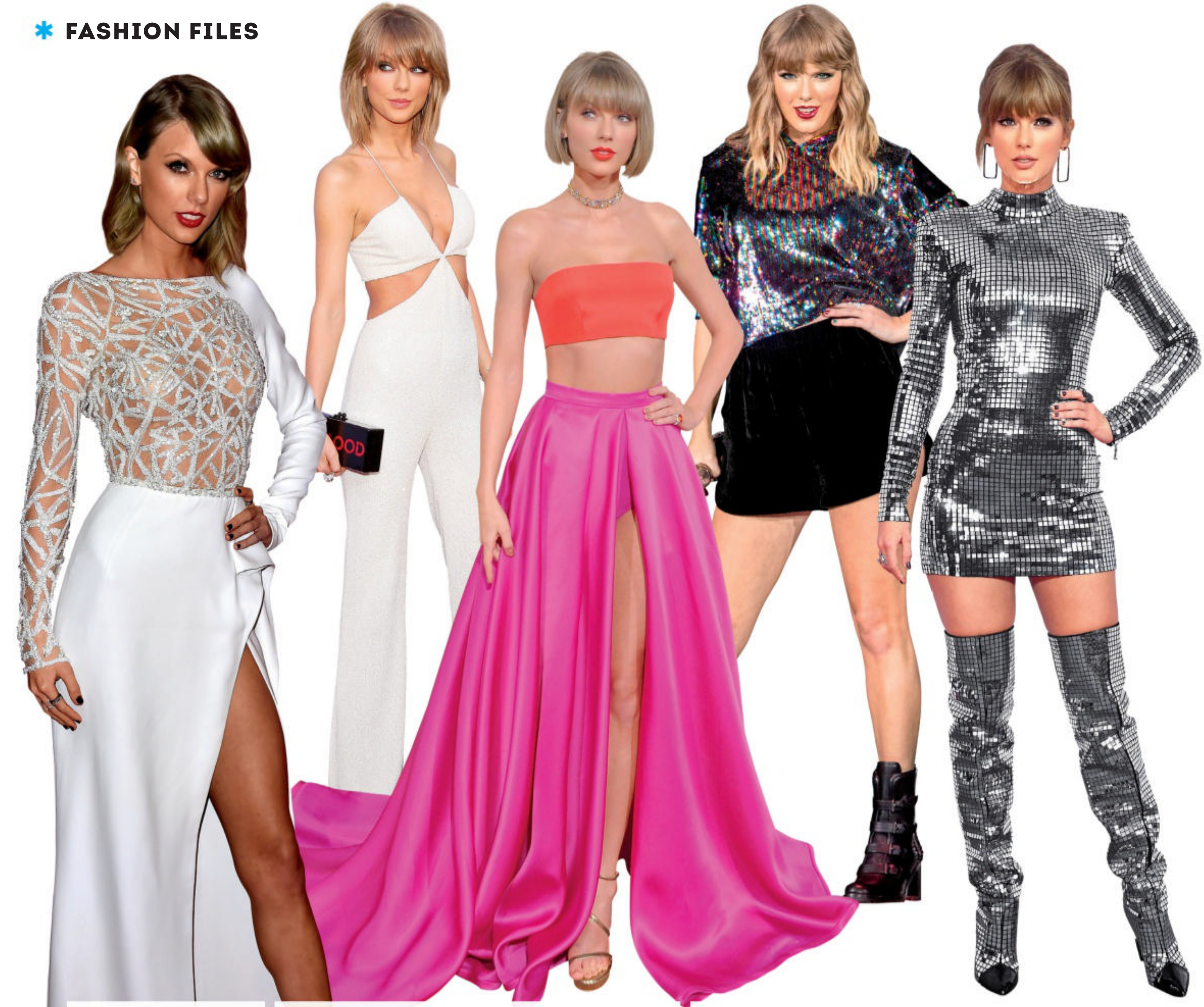
Bye-bye girlie! A more mature-looking Taylor commanded attention at the MTV Video Music Awards (where she was surprisingly not nominated for anything) in a white suit by J. Mendel paired with gold gladiator-style sandals from Tom Ford.



2013

GOLDEN GIRL

Taylor proved everything that glitters is gold in a sexy Julien Macdonald minidress for the American Music Awards, where she took home trophies for four of her five noms. As daring as the look was, the 23-year-old was still demure: nude mesh was added to the bodice cutout.



2014

HEAVEN SENT

After headlining the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in London, the singer partied with the brand's "Angels" in a white Zuhair Murad gown with a crystal-and-nude bodice and a thigh-high slit to show off her own supermodel legs. For added drama, a dark red lip and a smoky eye.

2015

WHITE-HOT

Taylor mixed things up at the Billboard Music Awards (where she took home six trophies) in a white jumpsuit from Balmain with side cutouts—and a shaggy 'do that added to the 1970s vibe. She carried an Edie Parker clutch customized with the words, "Bad Blood."

2016

BOLD & BEAUTIFUL

With her seven nominations, the Grammy Awards was a major night for Taylor—and she dressed accordingly in a showstopping Atelier Versace orange bandeau top and fuchsia maxi skirt. On her feet, she went simple, with strappy gold sandals from Stuart Weitzman.

2017

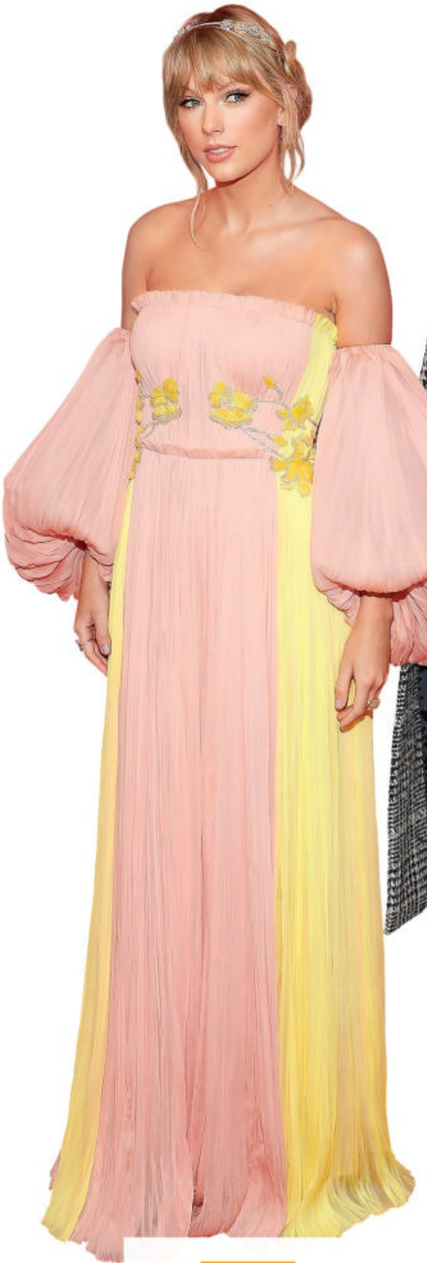
HOLIDAY SPIRIT

For the Jingle Ball concert, the Christmas lover looked festive in a sparkly top from Jessica Jones. And in the spirit of her brand-new album, *Reputation*, she rocked her own merch on her fingers: a snake ring from the Taylor Swift collection.

2018

DISCO QUEEN

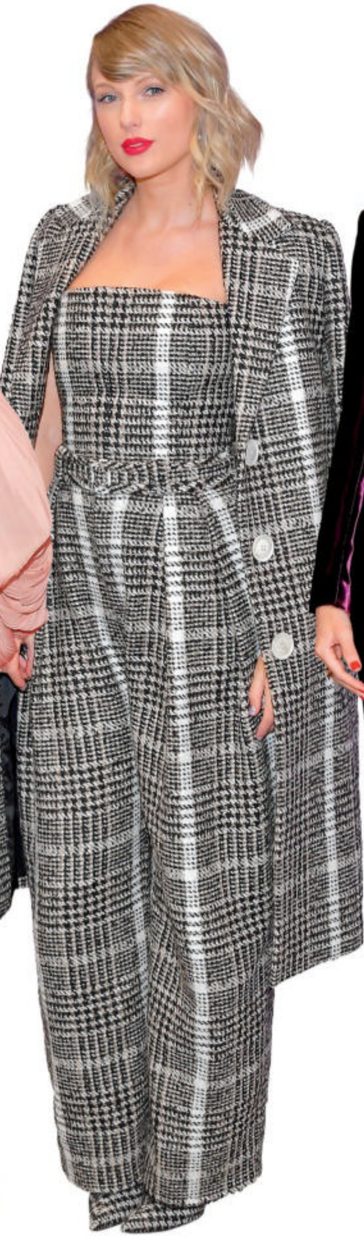
Unlike anything she's ever worn before, Taylor looked like a deconstructed disco ball in a Balmain galactic mini and matching boots at the American Music Awards. Other retro touches: her '60s bouffant hairdo and '80s Ofira geometric earrings.



2019

BACK IN TIME

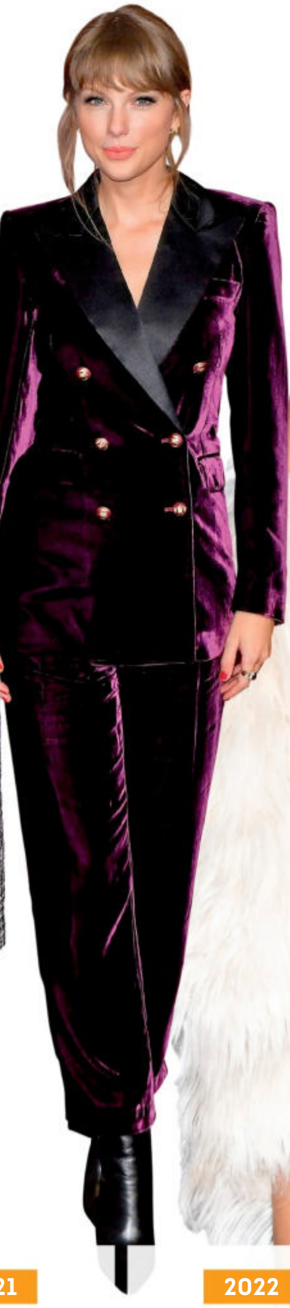
Hearkening back to "Love Story," the singer was a real-life princess in a J. Mendel silk gown with floral embroidery at the Time 100 Gala. The rest of her look was also straight out of a fairy tale: a romantic updo with face-framing tendrils, gold headband and glowy makeup.



2020

GIRL BOSS

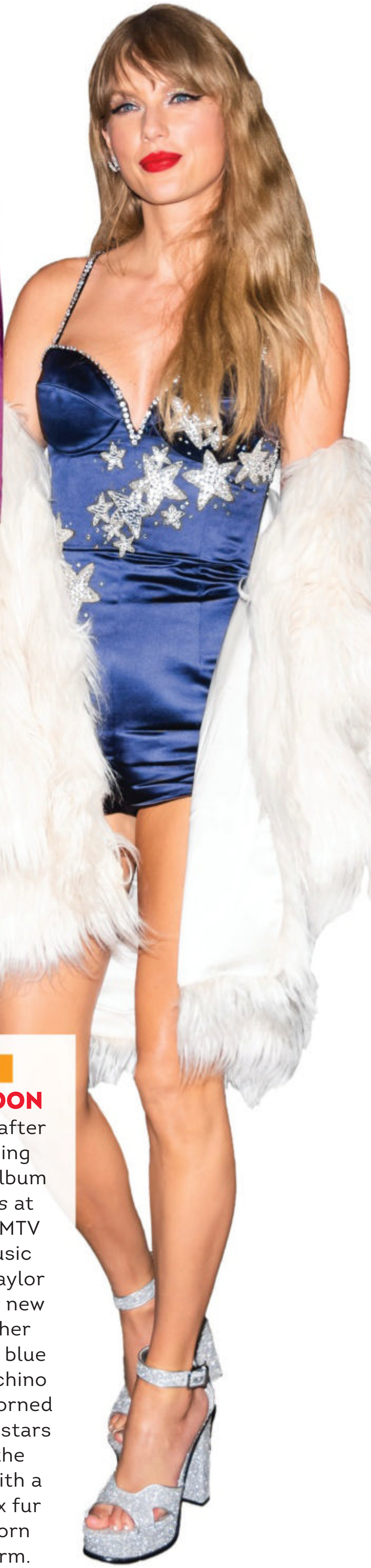
Taylor made a power move in head-to-toe plaid at the Sundance Film Festival premiere of *Miss Americana*. The coordinated look consisted of a Carmen March top, pants and coat, plus Manolo Blahnik boots specially designed to match the houndstooth ensemble.



2021

DEEP PURPLE

Taylor evoked the feels of fall in a tailored velvet suit with brass buttons and shoulder pads from Etro for the "All Too Well" short-film premiere in New York. She kept the look sleek and sophisticated with season-friendly Alexandre Birman stiletto black boots.



2022

BLUE MOON

Moments after announcing her 10th album *Midnights* at the 2022 MTV Video Music Awards, Taylor debuted a new look for her new era: a blue satin Moschino romper adorned with silver stars across the bustier, with a white faux fur jacket worn at mid-arm.

→ The Holiday House, built in 1930, sits on 5 acres of land.

HOME Sweet HOME

The singer's $80 million-plus real estate portfolio has grown along with her success—from her first Nashville condo to a compound of penthouses in New York City.

↑ Taylor still owns her Nashville condo and was spotted here in recent years.

MUSIC ROW PENTHOUSE

Nashville, Tennessee

$2 MILLION

Taylor Swift's first real-estate purchase, made when she was 20, was a three-bedroom condo located on the top floor of the contemporary Adelicia on Nashville's Music Row. In addition to floor-to-ceiling windows offering a skyline view of the city, the pad features two balconies, a study, a fireplace and tons of closet space. She also personally designed the *Alice in Wonderland*-inspired interior—complete with a spiral staircase—described as "whimsical girlie."

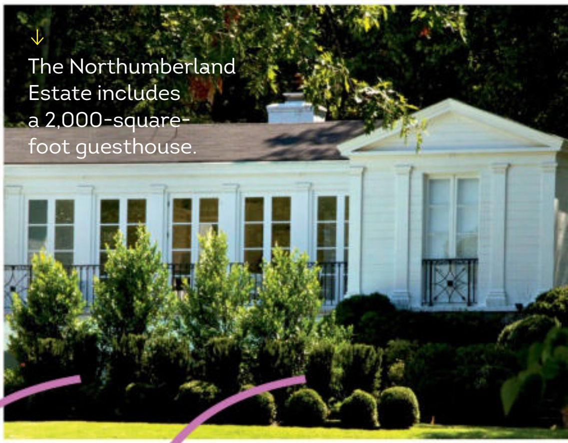
HOLIDAY HOUSE

Westerly, Rhode Island

$7 MILLION

Fans of "The Last Great American Dynasty" are familiar with the song's subject, Rebekah Harkness, the wealthy but renegade widow of Standard Oil heir William Hale Harkness, who was despised by the local townsfolk for her wild ways. Harkness once owned this epic eight-bedroom Colonial mansion with 10 bathrooms (two in the primary suite alone) that Taylor bought in 2013. It boasts eight

The kitchen is the most contemporary room in the Tribeca duplex, with marble countertops and stainless steel appliances.



The Northumberland Estate includes a 2,000-square-foot guesthouse.

fireplaces, a 36-foot-long parlor, a 45-foot sunroom, an octagon-shaped dining room, a workshop, a five-car garage and ocean views from every room. The Holiday House, as it's named, was the site of Taylor's star-studded Fourth of July parties from 2013 to 2017. The beachfront property also hosted fan sessions to preview *1989* and *Reputation*—much tamer than the lavish soirees thrown by Harkness, "a misfit widow getting gleeful revenge on the town that cast her out" in Taylor's *folklore* ode.

TRIBECA COMPOUND

New York City

$48 MILLION

Welcome to New York, indeed! In 2014, the Nashville transplant moved to the Big Apple, a place she had been "intimidated by" for years. And she went all out: Taylor purchased $20 million adjacent penthouses in lower Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood (one from *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson) and renovated them into one massive home of 10 bedrooms and 10 bathrooms. Three years later, she snapped up the four-story town house next door, paying $18 million for the 100-year-old property with a theater, a gym, a bar and a steam bath. But she wasn't done: In 2018, Taylor bought a third condo in the original building for nearly $10 million—which explains why fans have dubbed the block "Taybeca."

The superstar especially loves the relative anonymity she enjoys in New York City, particularly from the intrusive paparazzi. "They don't provoke me, or ask weird questions," she told *Rolling Stone*. "And a lot of

WHEN A SWEET LITTLE 12-YEAR-OLD SAYS TO THEIR MOM, 'TAYLOR LIVES AN HOUR FROM HERE,' MORE TIMES THAN NOT, THEY'LL MAKE THE TRIP."

Taylor Swift, on fans showing up at her home, to *Rolling Stone*

Taylor is only the second owner of the Samuel Goldwyn estate.

them are long-lensing it—which, if you have to have paparazzi in your life, is such a better way."

NORTHUMBERLAND ESTATE

Nashville, Tennessee

$2.5 MILLION

In 2011, Taylor picked up a second Nashville property, a 5,000-square-foot Greek Revival mansion—but not for herself. The four-bedroom estate was a gift for her parents, Scott and Andrea Swift, and her mother still lives there on occasion. Located on 5 acres behind iron gates, there's also a pool, a two-story guesthouse, manicured gardens and a five-car garage.

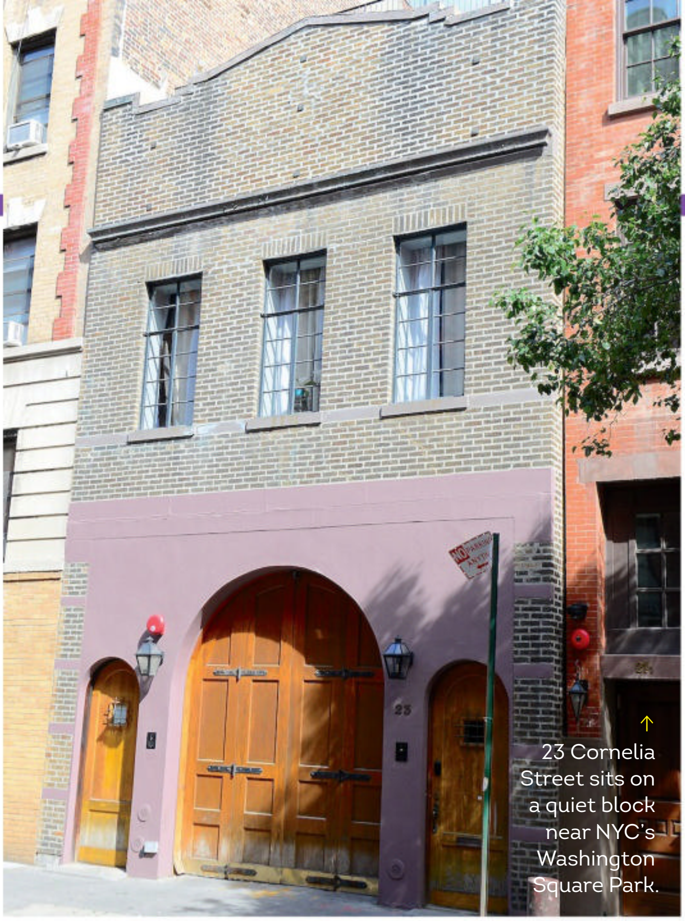
OLD HOLLYWOOD MANSION

Beverly Hills, California

$25 MILLION

Taylor's West Coast home base has a place of Hollywood history: it's the former mansion of MGM studio boss Samuel Goldwyn. Built in 1934, the sprawling 11,000-square-foot Georgian Revival home boasts seven bedrooms, 10 bathrooms, a screening room, a library, a gym, a card room, a pool, a sunken tennis court, plus a climate-controlled wine cellar large enough to house 1,000 bottles.

In 2015, Taylor purchased the property directly from the Goldwyn estate. Constructed by MGM set designers in an effort to save money during the Depression, by the time Taylor bought it eight decades later, it had seen better days. She's since had it restored to its original glory, when the mansion—located on 2 acres behind the Beverly Hills Hotel—hosted silver-screen icons including Charlie Chaplin, Clark Gable and Marlene Dietrich. "We've preserved and maintained a lot of the elements and those that were deteriorating, we've replicated," Taylor's architect, Monique Schenk, explained in a 2017 Beverly Hills City Council meeting that approved the home's landmark status.



↑ 23 Cornelia Street sits on a quiet block near NYC's Washington Square Park.

'I Rent a Place on Cornelia Street'

ALL ABOUT THE MANHATTAN CARRIAGE HOUSE THAT INSPIRED HER SONG.

In the summer of 2016, while her Tribeca compound was being renovated, Taylor rented a three-story town house in Manhattan's Greenwich Village—immortalized in the *Lover* track named after its location, "Cornelia Street." The lyrics describe the delicate beginning of her relationship with Joe Alwyn, and if it should not work out, "I'll never walk Cornelia Street again." Fans didn't know it, but Taylor actually first referenced the place on *Reputation*'s "King of My Heart" ("Up on the roof with a schoolgirl crush / Drinking beer out of plastic cups"), which she wrote in the living room.

Built in 1899, the 5,500-square-foot home features four bedrooms, a indoor pool, a gym and several terraces, as well as a basement with a double-height lounge and garden. But perhaps most appealing to Taylor was the garage, that allowed her and her security team to come and go without being seen from the street. The owner at the time, former Soho House exec David Aldea, admitted he "didn't know who Taylor Swift was" when she first inquired about leasing the home—which rented for $50,000 a month. Three years later in 2019, the same year "Cornelia Street" was released, the property sold for $11.5 million.

WHICH ERA ARE YOU?

There's a Taylor Swift album for every personality. Find yours!

1 | If you could paint your bedroom any color, it would be:

A gold
B purple
C red
D white
E gray
F pink
G green
H blue

2 | Pick an animal:

A horse
B dolphin
C cat
D bird
E snake
F dog
G squirrel
H wolf

3 | Your dream vacation is:

A Nashville
B Rome
C New England
D New York City
E Mexico
F London
G staycation at home
H Paris

4 | Your go-to Track 5:

A "White Horse"
B "Dear John"
C "All Too Well"
D "All You Had to Do Was Stay"
E "Delicate"
F "The Archer"
G "My Tears Ricochet"
H "You're on Your Own, Kid"

5 | Pick a love interest:

A Joe Jonas
B John Mayer
C Jake Gyllenhaal
D Harry Styles
E Calvin Harris
F Joe Alwyn
G none of them
H all of them

6 | It's the weekend. What's your ideal activity?

A make a mood board
B Netflix and chill
C night out with your BFFs
D speed-dating event
E practice self-care
F picnic in the park
G curl up with a good book
H journaling

JOE JONAS

JOHN MAYER

JAKE GYLLENHAAL

→ A businessman (Richard Gere) finds real love with an escort (Julia Roberts) in *Pretty Woman*.

7 | Describe your personal style:

A boho
B glam
C trendy
D vintage
E edgy
F vibrant
G minimalist
H retro

8 | Who would be in your squad?

A Abigail Anderson
B Selena Gomez
C Ed Sheeran
D Lena Dunham
E Camila Cabello
F Gigi Hadid
G Blake Lively
H Karlie Kloss

9 | Pick a month:

A February
B May
C November
D July
E October
F April
G August
H December

10 | What's your fave romantic movie:

A *The Princess Bride*
B *Enchanted*
C *Love Actually*
D *Pretty Woman*
E *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*
F *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*
G *The Notebook*
H *Titanic*

HARRY STYLES

CALVIN HARRIS

JOE ALWYN

ANSWER KEY

Mostly
As
FEARLESS

Mostly
Bs
SPEAK NOW

Mostly
Cs
RED

Mostly
Ds
1989

Mostly
Es
REPUTATION

Mostly
Fs
LOVER

Mostly
Gs
FOLKLORE/ EVERMORE

Mostly
Hs
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↑
Taylor kicked off the Australian leg of her The Red Tour in Sydney playing to a sold-out crowd of 40,000 in December 2013.

> “I started writing songs when I was 12 and since then, it’s been the compass guiding my life, and in turn, my life guided my writing.”
>
> *Taylor Swift*

The megastar dazzled fans when she performed “Me!” at the 2019 Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas.